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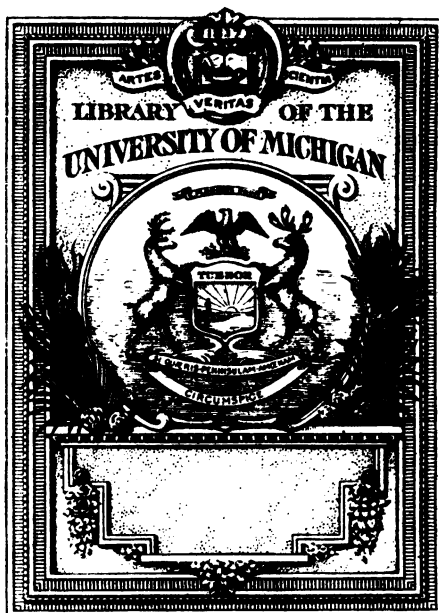
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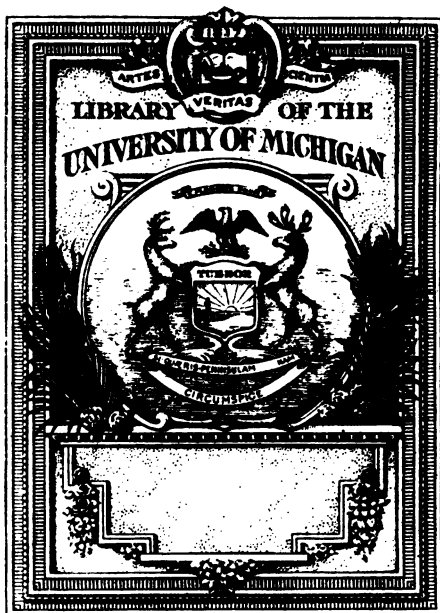
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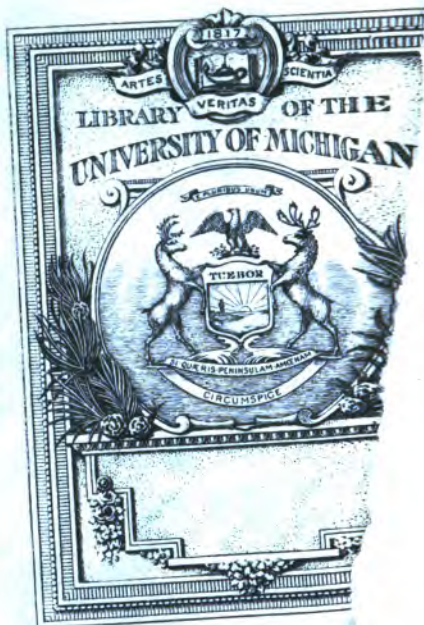
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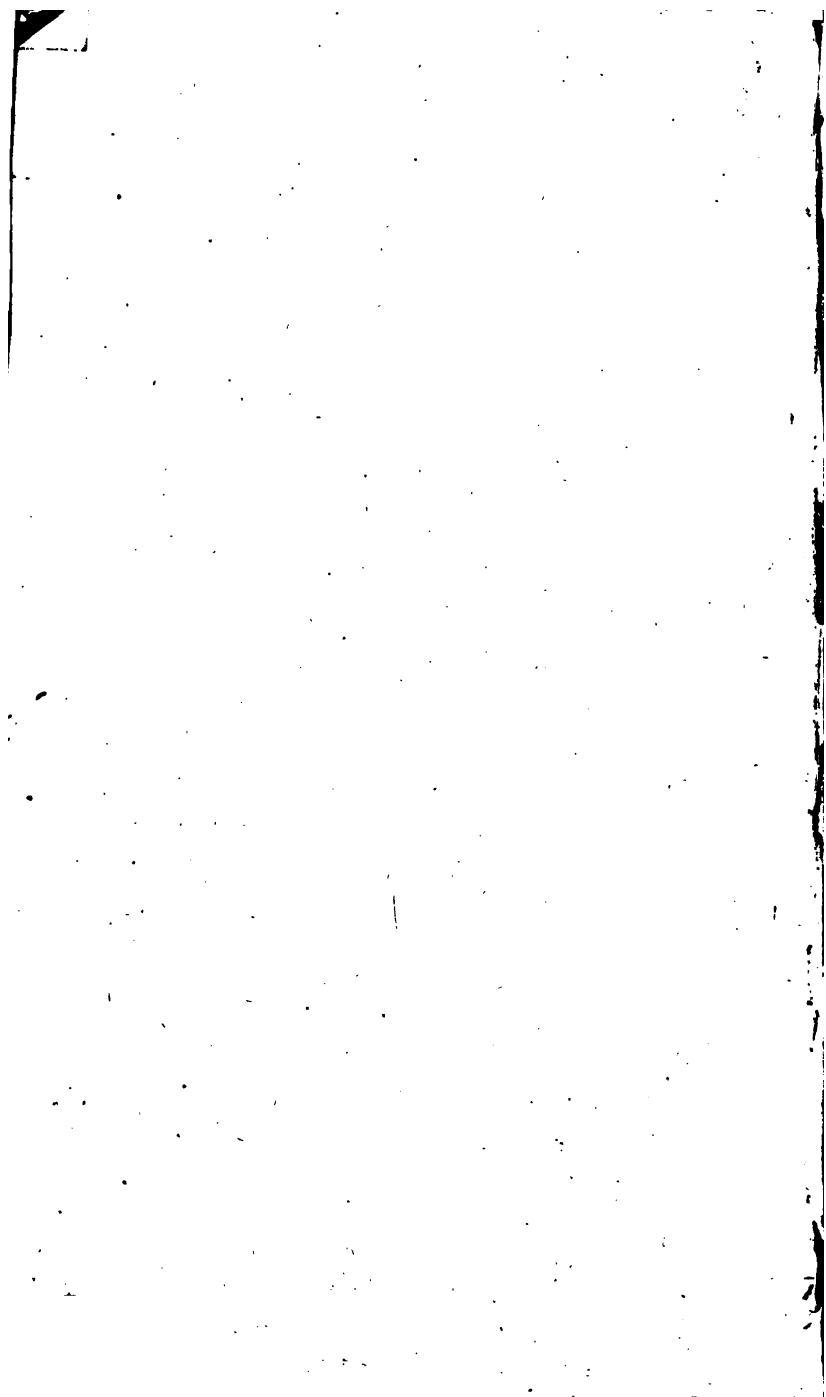
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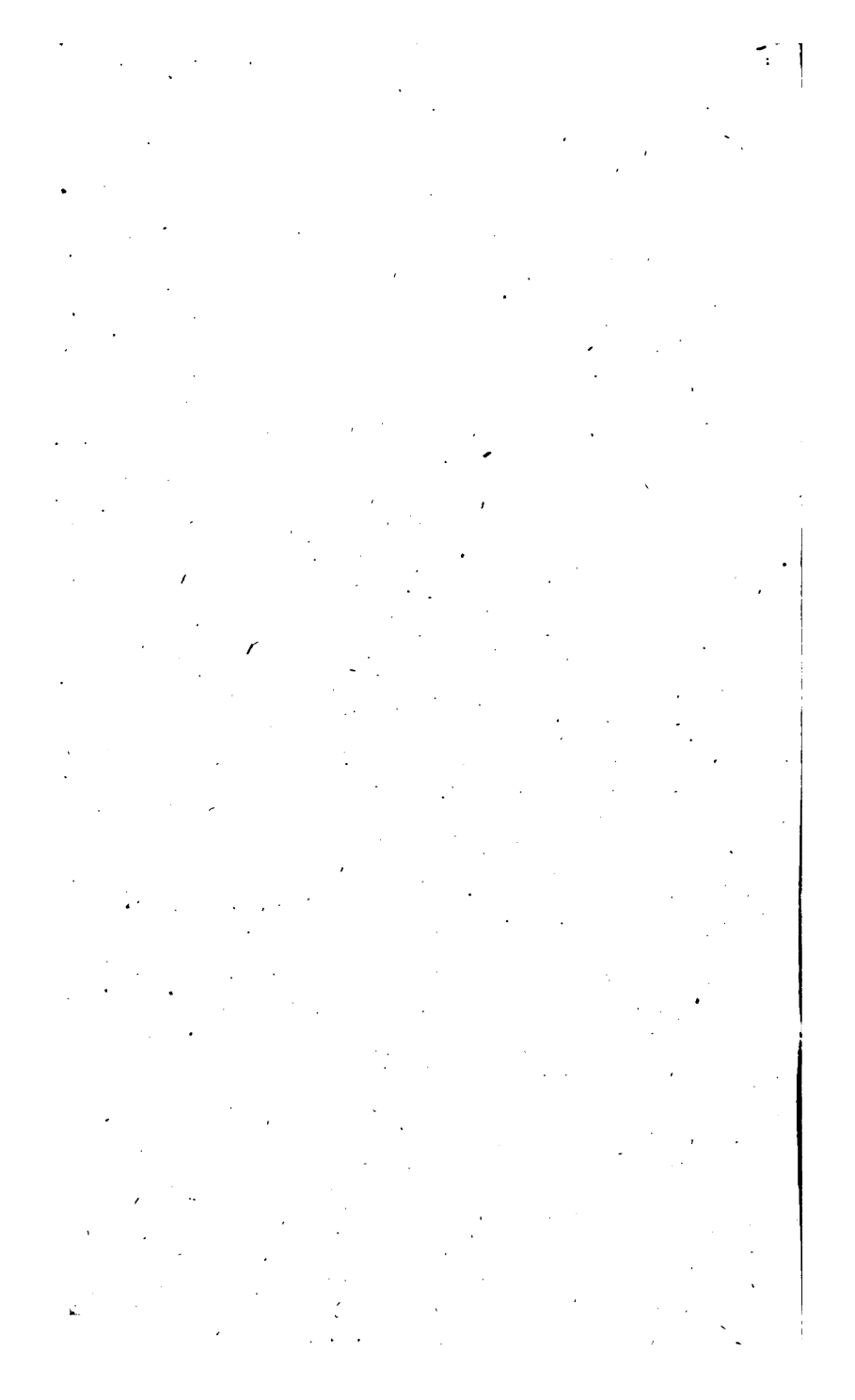
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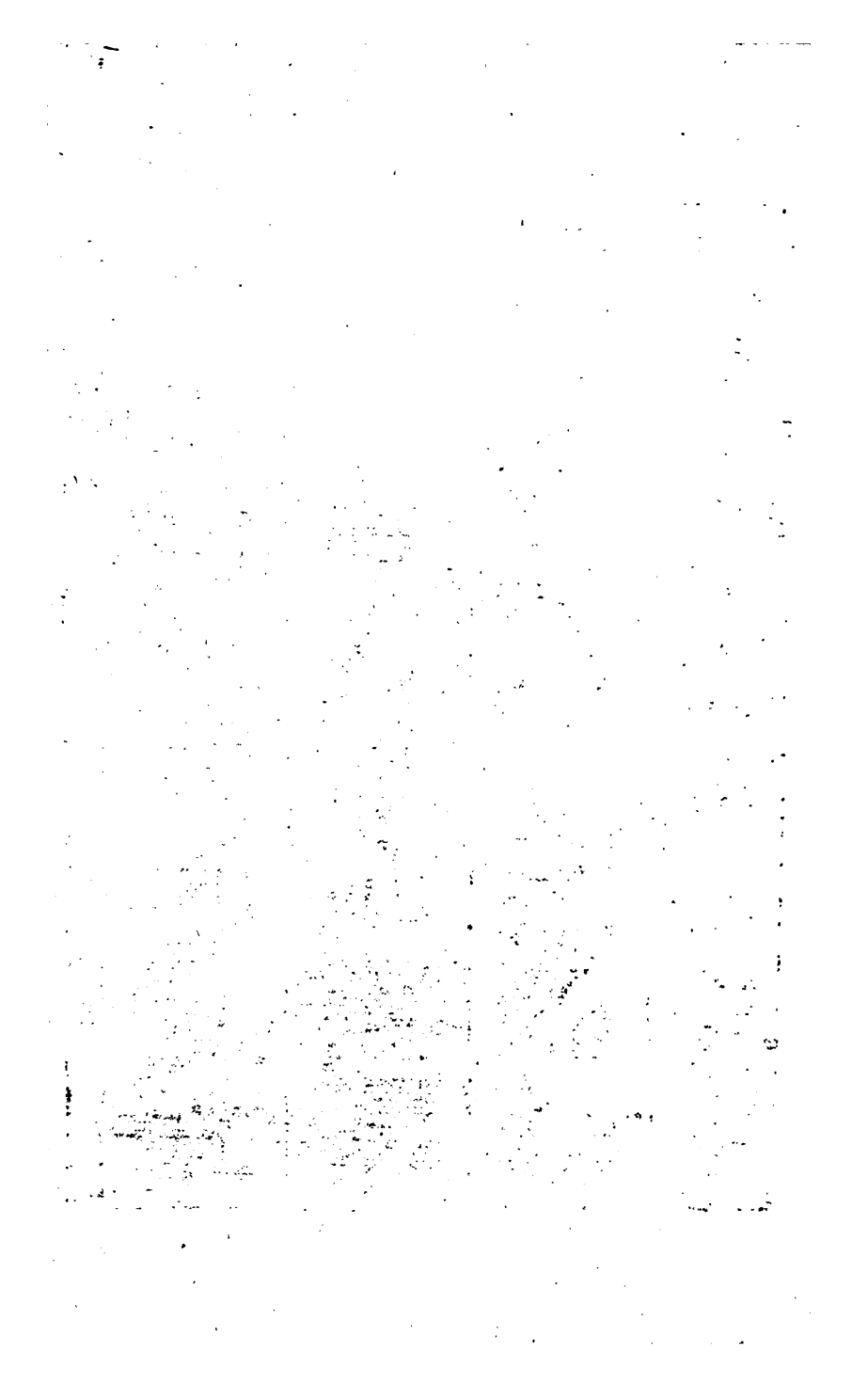
Yrs & wife













*Allestree, Richard*  
The ART of  
*Isabella Trumayn*  
Contentment

By the Author of  
THE WHOLE DUTY OF MAN, &c.

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*It is but lost labor, that ye hasten to rise up early, and so late take rest;  
and eat the bread of carefulness: for so he giveth his beloved sleep.*  
Psal. 127. 3.

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At the THEATER in OXFORD  
M. DC. LXXVII

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T H E

# PREFACE.

 *HE desire of happiness is so coessential with our nature, so interwoven and incorporate with it ; that nothing but the dissolution of the whole frame can extinguish it. This runs thro the whole race of mankind, and amidst the infinit variety of other inclinations, preserves its self entire. The most various contradictory tempers do yet*

## The Preface.

*yet conspire in this, and men of the most unequal fortunes, are yet equal in their wishès of being happy.*

*But this concurrence as to the end, is not more universal then the disagreement about the way. Every man would have happinefs, but wherein that consists, or how it is to be attain'd has bin very diversly opin'd, Indeed the ultimate supreme happinefs as it is originally inherent in God, so it is wrapt up in those clouds and darkness, which, as the Psalmist saies, are round about him Psal. 18. 11. And we can see nothing of it, but in those gleams and raies he is pleas'd to dart out upon us: so that all our estimates as to our final felicity, must be mesur'd by those revelations he has made of it.*

*But*

## The Preface.

*But one would think our temporal happiness were as much a mystery as our eternal, to see what variety of blind pursuits are made after it. One man thinks 'tis seated on the top pinnacle of honor, and climbs till perhaps he falls head-long. Another thinks it a mineral, that must be dig'd out of the earth, and toils to lade himself with thick clay, Hab. 2. 6. and at last finds a grave, where he sought his treasure. A third supposes it consists in the variety of pleasures, and wearies himself in that pursuit, which only cloies, and disappoints. Yet every one of these can read your lectures of the gross mistake and folly of the other, whilst himself is equally deluded.*

*Thus do men chase an imaginary  
good,*

## The Preface.

*good, till they meet with real evils ; herein exposing themselves to the same cheat Laban put upon Jacob , they serve for Rachel , and are rewarded with Leah , court fancied beauty , and marry loath'd deformity. Such delusive felicities as these are the largesses of the Prince of the Air , who once attempted to have enveigled even Christ himself , Mat. 4.*

*But Gods proposals are more sincere : he knows how sandy , how false a foundation all these external things must make , and therefore warns us not to build so much as our present satisfaction upon them , but shews us a more certain , a more compendious way to acquire what we gasp after , by telling us that as Godliness in respect of the next , so contentment for this  
world*



## The Preface.

world is great gain. 1 Tim. 6. 6. *It is indeed the unum necessarium, the one point in which all the lines of wordly happiness are concentred, and to complete its excellence, 'tis to be had at home : nay indeed only there. We need not ramble in wild pursuits after it, we may form it within our own breasts : no man wants materials for it, that knows but how to put them together.*

*And the directing to that skill is the only design of the ensuing Tract, which coming upon so kind an errand, may at least hope for an unprejudic'd reception. Contentment is a thing we all profess to aspire to, and therefore it cannot be thought an unfriendly office to endeavor to conduct men to it. How far the ensuing con-*  
*side-*

## The Preface.

*considerations may tend to that end, I must leave to the judgment, and experience of the Reader, only desiring him that he will weigh them with that seriousness which befits a thing wherein both his happiness and duty are concern'd ; for in this ( as in many other instances ) God has so twisted them together, that we cannot be innocently miserable. The present infelicities of our murmurs and impatencies, have an appendant guilt, which will consign us to a more irreversible state of dissatisfaction hereafter.*

THE



# THE ART OF CONTENTMENT.

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## SECT. I.

*Of the necessary Connexion between Happiness and Contentment.*

I.



OD who is essentially happy in himself, can receive no accession to his felicity by the poor contributions of men. He cannot therefore be suppos'd to have made them upon intuition of increasing, but communicating his happiness. And this his original

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ginal design is very visible in all the parts of his Economy towards them. When lapsed man had counterplotted against himself, defeated the purpose of the Divine goodness, and plunged his whole nature into the opposite state of endless misery; he yet reinforc'd his first design, and by an expedient as full of wonder as mercy, the death of his Son, recovers him to his former capacity of blifs. And that it might not only be a bare capacity, he has added all other methods proper to work upon a rational creature. He has shew'd him his danger, set before him in perspective that eternal Tophet, which he is advis'd to shun. On the other side he has no less lively describ'd the heavenly *Jerusalem*, the celestial Country to which he is to aspire: nay farther has levell'd his road to it, leads him not as he did the Israelites thro the wilderness, thro intricate mazes to puzzle his understanding; thro *a land of drought wherein were fiery Serpents and Scorpions*, Deut. 8. 15. to discourage and affright him, but has in the Gospel chalkt out a plain, a safe, nay a pleasant path; as much superior both in the ease of the way, and in the end to which it leads, as heaven is to *Canaan*.

2. BY

2. BY doing this, he has not only secured our grand and ultimate happiness, but provided for our intermedial also. Those Christian duties which are to carry us to heaven, are our refreshment, our viaticum in our journey; his yoke is not to gall and fret us, but an engine by which we may with ease (and almost insensibly) draw all the clogs and incumbrances of human life. For whether we take Christianity in its whole complex, or in its several and distinct branches, 'tis certainly the most excellent, the most compendious art of happy living: its very tasks are rewards, and its precepts are nothing but a divine sort of Alchymy, to sublime at once our nature and our pleasures.

3. THIS may be evidenc'd in every particular of the Evangelical Law: but having formerly made some attempt towards it in another \* tract, I shall <sup>Decay of</sup> not here reassume the whole sub- <sup>Christian Pie-</sup>ject. I shall only single out one particular precept, wherein happiness is not (as the others) only implied, and must be catcht at the rebound by consequence and event; but is literally express'd, and is the very matter of the duty; I

mean the precept of acquiescence and *Contentment*; Happiness and this true genuine Contentment, being terms so convertible, that to bid us be content, is but another phrase for bidding us be happy.

4. TEMPORAL enjoiments, such as are plesure, wealth, honor, and the rest, tho they make specious pretences to be the mesure of human happiness, are all of them justly discarded by the Philosopher in his *Ethics*, upon this one consideration; that coming from abroad they may be withheld or taken from us; and our tenure being precarious, we even for that reason are unhappy in our most desirable possessions; because we still are liable to be so. And therefore he concludes, that felicity must be placed in the mind and soul, which stands without the reach of fortune; and in the practice of vertue, which in its own nature, and not in its contingent use is truly good, and therefore certainly renders the possessors such.

5. BUT this practice being diffused thro the whole extent of Moral duty, *Epictetus* thought he had deserved well of human nature, when he drew it up in two short words, to *sustain* and *abstain*: that is to bear with constancy adverse events;  
and

and with moderation enjoy those that are prosperous. Which complexure of Philosophy is yet more fully, as well as more compendiously express'd in the single notion of *Contentment*: which involves the patient bearing of all misadventures, and generous contempt of sensual pleasures. This state of mind the Greeks express by calling it *αὐτάρεια*, or self-sufficiency, which, we know properly speaking, is one of the incommunicable attributes of the divine nature, and the Stoicks expressly pretend, that by it mortal men are enabled to rival their Gods; in *Seneca's* Phrase, to make a controversy with *Jupiter* himself. But abating the insolent blasphemy of an independent felicity, Christianity acknowledges a material truth in the assertion: and *S. Paul* declares of himself, that having learnt how to want and how to abound, and in whatever state he happens to be in; therewith to be content: he is able to do all things thro' Christ that strengthens him, Phil. 4. 11, 12, 13. and having nothing to possess all thing, 2 Cor. 6. 10.

6. WHICH great event comes about, not only because all good things are eminently in the divine nature, and he who by Vertue and Religion possesses Him, thereby

thereby in a full equivalence has every thing ; but also upon human measures , and principles of Philosophy : the compendious address to wealth , as *Plato* rightly observ'd , being not to encrease possessions , but lessen desires. And if so , 'twill follow that the contented man must be abundantly provided for , being so entirely satisfied with what he has , as to have no desires at all. Indeed 'tis truly said of covetous men , and is equally verified of all who have any desire to gratify , that they want no less what they have , then what they have not : but the reverse of that Paradox is really made good by *Contentment* , which bestows on men the enjoiment of whatever they have , and also whatever they have not ; and by teaching to want nothing , abundantly secures not to want happiness.

7. ON the other side this one grace being absent , it is not in the power of any success or affluence to make life a tolerable thing. Let all the materials of earthly happiness be amast together and slung upon one man , they will without contentment be but like the fatal prize of *Tampeja's* treason , who was prest to death with the weight of her booty. He that has the elements of felicity , and yet cannot



not form them into satisfaction, is more desperately miserable than he that wants them: for he who wants them has yet something to hope for, and thinks if he had them he might be happy; but he who insignificantly possesses them, has no reserve, has not so much as the Flattery of an expectation; for he has nothing left to desire, and yet can be as little said to enjoy.

8. HE therefore that would have the extract, the quintessence of happiness, must seek it in Content. All outward accessions are but the dross & earthy part; this alone is the spirit, which when 'tis once separated depends not upon the fate of the other; but preserves its vigor when that is destroyed. St. Paul whom I before mention'd, is a ready instance of it, who professes to be *content in what ever state*; Contentment being not so inseparately link'd to eternal things, but that they may subsist apart. That those are often without it we are too sure, and that it may be without them is as certainly true; tho by our own default we have not so many examples of it. A heart that rightly computes the difference between temporals and eternal, may resolve with the Prophet, *Altho*

*tho the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flocks shall be cut from the fold, and there shall be no herds in the stall; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my Salvation,* Hab. 3. 17, 18. He that has God need not much deplore the want of any thing else: nor can he that considers the plenty and glory of his future state, be much dejected with the want or abjectness of his present.

9. **YET** so indulgent is God to our infirmities, that knowing how unapt our impatient natures are to *walk only by faith, and not at all by sight*, 2 Cor. 5. 7. he is pleas'd to give us fair antepasts of satisfaction here, dispenses his temporal blessings tho not equally, yet so universally, that he that has least, has enough to oblige not only his acquiescence, but his thankfulness. Tho every man has not all he wishes, yet he has that which is more valuable than that he complains to want; nay which he himself could worse spare were it put to his option.

10. **AND** now from such a disposeure of things who would not expect that mankind should be the chearfullest part of the creation?

creation? that the *sun* should not more rejoice to run his course. 19. 5. then man should to finish his: that a journey which has so blessed an end, and such good accommodation by the way, should be past with all imaginable alacrity, and that we should live here practicers and learners of the state of unmix'd interminable joys to which we aspire. But alas, if we look upon the universality of men, we shall find it nothing so, but while all other creatures gladly follow the order of their creation, take pleasure in those things God has assign'd for them, we with a sullen perverseness quarrel at what we should enjoy, and in every thing make it our business, not to fit it for our use, but to find out some concealed quality which may render it unfit. We look insidiously upon our blessings, like men that design'd only to pick a quarrel, and start a pretence for mutining. From hence it is that man who was design'd the Lord of the world, to whose satisfaction all inferior beings were to contribute, is now the unhappiest of the creatures: nay as if the whole order of the universe were inverted, he becomes slave to his own vassals, courts all these

red and satiated; like Amnon *he hates more than he loved*, 2 Sam. 13. 15. and is sicker

· 10. · A N D thus will it ever be till we can keep our desires more at home, and not suffer them to ramble after things without reach. That honest Roman, who from his extraordinary industry upon his little spot of ground received such an increase as brought him under suspicion of witchcraft, is a good example for us. God has placed none of us in so barren a soil, in so forlorn a state, but there is something in it which may afford us comfort; let us husband that to the utmost, and 'tis scarce imaginable what improvement, even he that appears the most miserable may make of his condition. But if in a fullon humor we will not cultivate our own field, because we have perhaps more mind to our neighbors, we may thank our selves if we starve. The despising of what God has already given us, is sure but cold invitation to farther bounty. Men are indeed forced sometimes

**SECT. I. Its Connexion with Happiness. 11**

to reward the mutinous; but God is not to be so assailed, nor is it that sort of violence which can ever force heaven. The Heathen could say that Jupiter sent his plagues among the poorer sort of men, because they were alwaies repining: and indeed there is so much of truth in the observation, that our impatience and discontent at our present condition, is the greatest provocation to God to make it worse.

II. It must therefore be resolv'd to be very contrary to our interest, and surely 'tis no less to our duty. It is so if we do but own our selves men, for in that is impli'd a subordination and submission to that power which made us so; and to dispute his managery of the world, to make other distributions of it then he has don, is to renounce our subjection, and set up for dominion. But this is yet more intolerable as we are Christians, it being a special part of the Evangelical discipline, cherefully to conform to any condition: *to know how to be abased, and how to abound, to be full and to be hungry*, Phil. 4. 12. *to be careful for nothing* ver. 6. Nay so little do's Christ give countenance to our peevish discontents, our wanton out-cries when

we are not hurt; that he requires more then a contentment, an exultancy and transport of joy under the heaviest pressures, under reproches and persecutions. *Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy*, Lu. 6. 23. And sure nothing can be more contrary to this, then to be alwaies whining and complaining, crying in the Prophets phrase, *my bones my leanness; wo is me*, Isa. 24. 16. when perhaps Moses's simile do's better fit our state, *Jesurun waxed fat and kicked*, Deut. 32. 15.

12. AND as this querulous humor is against our interest and duty, so is it visibly against our ease. 'Tis a sickness of the mind, a perpetual gnawing and craving of the appetite without any possibility of satisfaction: and indeed is the same in the heart which the *Caninus appetitus* is in the stomach; to which we may aptly enough apply that description we find in the Prophet, *he shall snatch on the right hand and be hungry, and he shall eat on the left and not be satisfied*, Esay. 9. 20. Where this sharp, this fretting humor abounds, nothing converts into nourishment: every new accession do's but excite some new desire: and as 'tis observ'd of a trencher-fed dog, that he tastes not one bit for the greedy

dy expectation of the next; so a discontented mind is so intent upon his pursuits, that he has no relish of his acquiescence. So that what the Prophet speaks of the Covetous, is equally applicable to all other sorts of Male-content: *he enlarges his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied*, Hab. 2. 5. And sure if the desire accomplished be, as Solomon saies, *sweet to the soul*, Prov. 13. 19, it must be exceedingly bitter, to be thus condemned to endless unaccomplishable desires; and yet this is the torture which every repining discontented spirit provides for its self.

13. **W H A T** a madness is it then for men to be so desperately bent against their interest and duty, as to renounce even their ease too for company? One would think this age were sensual enough to be at defiance with the least shadow of uneasiness. It is so I am sure where it ought not, every thing is laborious when 'tis in compliance with their duty: a few minutes spent in prayer, *Oh what a weariness is it!* Mal. 2. 13. If they chance but to miss a meal, they are ready to cry out, *their knees are weak thro fasting*. Psa. 109. 23. yet they can without regret, or any self-com-  
passion

passion, macerate and cruciate themselves with anxious cares and vexations, and as the Apostle speaks, 1 Tim. 6. 10. *pierce themselves thro with many sorrows*. That proposal therefore which was very rashly made by St. Peter to our Saviour, *Master pity thy self*, Mat. 16. 12. which we render *be it far from thee*, would here be an advised motion to the generality of mankind, who are commonly made unhappy not by any thing without them, but by those restless impatiencies that are within them.

14. It may therefore be a seasonable office to endeavor the appeasing these storms, by recalling them to those sober rational considerations, which may shew as well the folly, as uneasiness of this repining unsatisfiable humor. 'Tis certain that in true reasoning, we can find nothing whereon to found it, but a great deal to enforce the contrary. Indeed 'tis so much against the dictate of reasonable nature to affect damage, sin, and torment, that were there nothing else to be said but what I have already mention'd, it might competently discover the great unreasonableness of this sin.

15. But we need not confine our appeal



peal to reason, as it is only a judg of utility and advantage; but enlarge it to another notion, as it is judg of equity and right: in which respect also it gives as clear and peremtory a sentence against all murmuring impatience. To evince this I shall insist upon these particulars.

1. that God is debtor to no man, and therefore whatever he affords to any, it is upon bounty not of right, a benevolence not a due. 2<sup>ly</sup> That this bounty is not streight or narrow, confin'd to some few particular persons, and wholly overskipping the rest, but more or less universally diffused to all. So that he who has the least, cannot justly say but he has bin liberally dealt with. 3<sup>ly</sup> that if we compare our blessings with our allaies, our good things with our evil, we shall find our good far surmounting. 4<sup>ly</sup> That we shall find them yet more so, if more so compare them with the good we have don, as on the contrary we shall find our afflictions scarce discernible if balanced with our sins. 5<sup>ly</sup> That as God is Rector of the universe, so it appertains to him to make such allotments, such distributions, as may best preserve the state of the whole. 6<sup>ly</sup> That God notwithstanding that universal care, has

has also a peculiar aspect on every particular Person, and disposes to him what he discerns best for him in special. 7<sup>th</sup> If we compare our adversities with those of other men, we shall allwaies find something that equals if not exceeds our own. All these are certain irrefragable truths, and there is none of them single but may, if well prest upon the mind, charm it into a calmness and resignation; but when there is such a conspiracy of arguments, it must be a very obstinate perverseness that can resist them: or should they fail to enforce a full conviction, will yet introduce those subsidiary proofs, which I have to alledg, so advantagiously, as will being put altogether, amount unto perfect and uncontroulable Evidence.

SECT.

SECT. II.

*Of Gods Absolute Sovereignty.*

I. **T**HE first proposition that God is debtor to no man, is too clear and apparent to require much of illustration: for as he is a free agent and may act as he pleases, so he is the sole proprietary and can wrongfully detain from none, because all original right is in himself. This has bin so much acknowledged by the blindest Heathens, that none of them durst make insolent addressees to their Gods, challenge any thing of them as of debt, but by sacrifices and praiers own'd their dependance and wants, and implor'd supplies. And sure Christianity teaches us not to be more sawcy. If those Deities who ow'd their very being to their votaries, were yet acknowledged to be the spring and source of all, we can with no pretence deny it to that supreme power in *whom we live, move, and have our being*, Acts. 17. 28. For if it were merely an

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act of his choice to give us a being, all his subsequent bounties can have no other original then his own good plesure. We could put no obligation upon God before we were: and when we began to be, we were his creatures, and so by the most indisputable right owe our selves to him, but can have no antecedent title on which to clame any thing from him: so that the Apostle might well make the challenge which he doth on Gods behalf, *Who hath given any thing unto him, and it shall be recompenc'd to him again?* Rom. 11. 35.

2. Now ordinary discretion teaches us not to be too bold in our expectation from one to whom we can plead no right. It has as little of prudence as modesty, to press impudently upon the bounty of a Patron, and do's but give him temptation (at least pretence) to deny. And if it be thus with men, who possible may somtimes have an interest, somtimes a vanity to oblige; it must be much more so towards God, who cannot be in want of us, & therefore need not buy us: *our good*, as the Psalmist speaks, *extends not to him.* Psal. 16. 2. He has a fundamental right in that little we are, which will stand good tho it should never be corroborated by greater benefits.

With

**SECT. II. Of Gods Absolute Sovereignty. 19**

With what an humble bashfulness should we then sue for any thing, who have no argument to invite the least donation, being already so preingag'd, that we cannot mortgage so much as our selves in consideration of any new favor? and surely extravagant hopes do very ill besit people in this condition. We see the modesty of good Mephibosheth, tho he was by a slanderous accusation outed of half the estate David had given him, yet upon a reflexion that he deriv'd it all from his good pleasure, disputed not the sentence, but cherefully resign'd the whole to the same disposeure, from which he received it, saying, *Yea let him take all*, 2 Sam. 19. 30. A rare example and fit for imitation, as being adapted to the present case, not only in that one circumstance of his having receiv'd all from the King, but also in that of the attainder of his blood, which he confesses in the former part of the verse, *for all of my fathers house were but dead men before my Lord*. And alas may we not say the very same? Was not our whole race tainted in our first Parent? So that if God had not the primary title of vassalage, he would in our fall have acquir'd that of confiscation and escheat.

And can we think our selves then in terms to capitulate and make our own conditions, and expect God should humor us in all our wild demands?

3. **THIS** is indeed to keep up that old rebellion of our Progenitor, for that consisted in a discontent with that portion God had assign'd him, and coveting what he had restrain'd him. Nay indeed it comes up to the height of the Devils proposal, the attempting *to be as God* Gen. 3. 5. For 'tis an endeavor to wrest the managery out of his hands, to supersede his Authority of dispensing to us and to carve for our selves. This is so mad an insolence, that were it possible to state a case exactly parallel between man and man, it would raise the indignation of any that but pretended to ingenuity. Yet this is, without hyperbole, the true meaning of every murmuring repining thought we entertain.

4. **BUT** as bad as it is, who is there of us, that can in this particular say, *we have made our heart clean*? Prov. 20. 9. 'Tis true we make some formal acknowledgment somtimes that we receive all from Gods gift: custom teaches us from our infancy after every meal we eat to give him thanks (tho even that is now thought too  
much

much respect, and begins to be discarded as unfashionable: ) yet sure he cannot be thought to do that in earnest, that has all the time of his eating bin grumbling that his table abounds not with such delicacies as his neighbors. And yet at this rate God knows are most of our thanksgivings. Indeed we have not so much ordinary civility to God, as we have to men. The common proverb teaches us not too curiously to pry into the blemishes of what is given us: but on Gods gifts we sit as Censors, nicely examine every thing which is any way disagreeable to our fancies, and as if we dealt with him under the notion of chapmen, disparage it, as Solomon saies buiers use to do, *it is naught, it is naught, saith the buier*, Prov. 20. 14. Nay we seem yet more absurdly to change the scene, and as if God were to make oblations to us, we as critically observe the defects of his benefactions, as the Levitical priests were to do those of the sacrifice, and (like angry Deities) scornfully reject, what ever do's not perfectly answer our wanton appetites.

5. AND now should God take us at our words, withdraw all those blessings which we so fastidiously despise, what a  
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condition were we in? 'Tis sure we have nothing to plead in reverse of that judgment. There is nothing in it against justice: for he takes but his own. This he intimates to Israel, Hof. 2. 9. *I will return and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax:* in which he asserts his own propriety, *my corn, my wine, &c.* and recalls them to the remembrance that they were put usufructuaries: and 'tis as evident that our tenure is but the same. Nay this proceeding would not be repugnant even to mercy, for even that is not obliged still to prostitute its self to our contempt. I am sure such a tolerance is beyond all the measures of humane lenity. Should any of us offer an alms to an indigent wretch, and he when he sees 'tis Silver, should murmur and exclaim that it is not Gold, would we not draw back our hand and reserve our charity for a more worthy object? 'Tis true indeed Gods thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor our narrow bowels equal measures for the divine compassions, and we experimentally find that his long-suffering infinitely exceeds ours; yet we know he do's in the  
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parable of the Lord and the servant, Mat. 18. declare, that he will proportion his mercy by ours, in that instance; and we have no promise that he will not do it in this: nay we have all reason to expect he should; for since his wisdom prompts him to do nothing in vain, and all his bounty to us is design'd to make us happy, when he sees that end utterly frustrated by our discontents, to what purpose should he continue that to us which we will be never the better for?

6. BESIDES tho he be exceedingly patient, yet he is not negligent or insensible: he takes particular notice, not only with what diligence we employ, but with what affections we resent every of his blessings. And as ingratitude is a vice odious to men, so it is extremely provoking to God; so that in this sense also, the words of our Savior are most true, from *him that hath not (i. e.)* that hath not a grateful sense and value, *shall be taken away even that he hath*, Mat. 25. 29. But we may find a threatning of this kind yet more exprefs to Israel, *because thou servedst not the Lord thy God with gladness and with joyfulness of heart for the abundance of all things, therefore shalt thou*

*thou serve thine enemies, whom the Lord God will send among thee, in hunger and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things*, Deut. 28. 27, 28. a sad and dismal. inversion, yet founded wholly in the want of that cheerful recognition which God expected from them. And if Israel, the lot of his own inheritance, that people whom he had singled out from all the nations of the world, could thus forfeit his favor by unthankfulness, sure none of us can suppose we have any surer entail of it. In a word as God loves a cheerful giver, so he also loves a cheerful receiver, one that complies with his end in bestowing, by taking a just complacence in his gifts. But the querulous and unsatisfied, reproch his bounty: accuse him of illiberality and narrowness of mind. So that he seems even in his honor engag'd to bring them to a righter apprehension of him, and by a deprivation teach them the value of those good things, which they could not learn by the enjoyment.

7. IF therefore ingenuity and gratitude cannot, yet at least let prudence and self-love engage us against this sin of *Murmuring*, which we see do's abundantly justify the character the Wise man gives

SECT. II. *Of Gods Absolute Sovereignty.* 25

gives when he tells us *'tis unprofitable*, Wis. I. 11. he might have said pernicious also, for so it evidently is in its effects. Let us then arm our selves against it, and to that purpose impress deeply upon our minds the present consideration, that God owes us nothing, and that whatever we receive is an alms, and not a tribute. *Diogenes* being asked what wine drank the most pleasant, answered; that which is drunk at anothers cost. And this circumstance we can never miss of to recommend our good things to us: for be they little or much, they come *gratis*. When therefore in a pettish mood we find our selves apt to charge God foolishly, and to think him strait-handed towards us, let us imagine we hear God expostulating with us, as the housholder in the parable, *Friend I do thee no wrong: is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?* Mat. 20. 15. If God have not the right of disposing, let us find out those that have, and see how much better we shall speed: but if he hath, let us take heed of disputing with him: we that subsist merely by his favor, had need court and cherish it by all the arts of humble observance. Every man is ready to say how ill beggary  
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and pride do agree. The first qualification we cannot put off; O let us not provide ti of the other so inconvenient, so odious an adjunct. Let us leave off prescribing to God (which no ingenuous man would do to an earthly benefactor) and let us betake our selves to a more holy and successful policy, the acknowledgment of past mercies, and our own unworthiness. This was *Jacobs* method, *I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth which thou hast shew'd unto thy servant: for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands,* and with this humble preface he introduces his petition for rescue in his present distress, *Deliver me I pray thee from the hand of my brother*, &c. Gen. 32. 10. 11. An excellent patern of Divine Rhetoric, which the success demonstrates to have bin very prevalent. And we cannot transcribe a better copy, to render our desires as successful. Indeed we are so utterly destitute of all arguments from our selves, that we can make no reasonable form of address, if we found it not in something of God: and there is nothing even in him adapted to our purpose, but his mercy; nor can that be so advantage-

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**SECT. II. Of Gods Absolute Sovereignty. 27**

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rageously urged by any thing, as by the former instances it has given of it self: for as God only is fit to be a precedent to himself, so he loves to be so. Thus we find, not only *Moses*, but God often recollecting his miraculous favors towards *Israel*, as an argument to do more: let us therefore accost him in his own way, and by a frequent and grateful recounting of his former mercies, engage him to future. Nor need we be at a loss for matter of such recollection, if we will but seriously consider what we have already received, which is the subject of the next Section.

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## S E C T. I I I.

*Of Gods unlimited Bounty.*

1. **I**T is the known character of an unworthy nature, to write injuries in Marble, and benefits in dust: and however some (as *Seneca* well observes) may acquit themselves of this imputation as to man, yet scarce any do so in relation to God. 'Tis true indeed the charge must be a little varied; for God neither will nor can do us injury: yet we receive any thing that is adverse with such a resentment as if it were, and engrave that in our memories with indelible characters, whilst his great and real benefits are either not at all observ'd, or with so transient an advertence, that the comparison of dust is beyond our pitch, and we may be more properly said to write them in water. Nay so far are we from keeping records and registers of his favors, that even those standing and fit ones which sense can prompt us to (without the aid of our memories) cannot obtain our notice.

2. WERE it not thus, it were impossible for men to be so perpetually in the  
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complaining Key, as if their voices were capable of no others found. One wants this, and another that, and a third something beyond them both, and so on *ad infinitum*; when all this while every one of them enjoies a multitude of good things without any remark. That very breath wherewith they utter their complaints, is a blessing, and a fundamental one too: for if God should withdraw that, they were incapable of whatsoever else they either have, or desire. 'Tis true that some mens impatiencies have risen so high, as to cast away life, because it was not clothed with all circumstances they wisht. Yet these are rare instances, and do only shew such mens depraved judgment of things. A rich Jewel is not the less valuable, because a mad man in his raving fit flings it into the fire: but as to the generality of men, the Devil (tho a liar) gave a true account of their sense, when he said, *Skin for skin, and all that a man hath will he give for his life*, Job. 2. 4. And tho perhaps in an angry fit many men have with *Jonas*, Chap. 4. 3. *wisht to die*, yet ten to one should death then come, they would be as willing to divert it, as was the man in the Apologue, who wearied

ed with his burden of sticks, flung it down and call'd for death, but when he came, own'd no other occasion for him, but to be helpt up again with his bundle. I dare in this appeal to the experience of those, who have seem'd very weary of life, whether when any suddain danger has surpris'd them, it has not as suddenly altered their mind, and made them more desire life, then before they abhorr'd it. 'Tis the common saying, as long as there is life there is hope: there is so as to secular concerns, for what strange revolutions do we often see in the age of man? from what despicable beginnings have many arriv'd to the most splendid conditions? Of which we have divers modern as well as ancient instances. And indeed 'tis admirable to see what time and industry will (with Gods blessing) effect. *But there is no work, nor device, nor knowledg, nor wisdom in the grave, Ec. 9. 10.* we can improve no more when we are once transplanted thither.

3. But this is yet much more considerable in respect of our spiritual state. Our life is the *day wherein we are to work, Joh. 9. 4.* (yea to work out our Salvation: ) but *when the night comes* (when death o-  
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vertakes) *no man can work.* Now alas when 'tis consider'd how much of this day the most of us have loiter'd away, how many of us have stood idle till the sixth or ninth hour, it will be our concern not to have our day close before the eleventh. Nay alas 'tis yet worse with us: we have not only bin idle, but very often ill busied; so that we have a great part of our time to unravel, and that is not to be don in a moment. For tho our works may fitly enough be represented by the Prophets comparison of a *spiders web*, Isay 59. 5. yet they want the best property even of that; they cannot be so soon undon. Vices that are radicated by time and custom, lie too deep to be lightly swept away. 'Tis no easy thing to perswade our selves to the will of parting with them. Many violences we must offer to our selves, a long and strict course of mortification must be gon thro, ere we can find in our hearts to bid them be gon: and yet when we do so, they are not so tractable as the Centurions servants. They will indeed come when ever we bid them, but they will scarce go so: they must be expell'd by force and by slow degrees; we must fight for every inch of ground we gain

gain from them: and as God would not assist the Israelites to subdue the Canaanites at once, Deut. 7. 22. so neither ordinarily do's he us to master perfectly our corruptions. Now a process of this difficulty is not to be dispatcht on a sudden. And yet this is not all our task, for we have not only ill habits to extirpate, but we have also good ones to acquire: 'tis not a mere negative vertue will serve our turns, nor will emty lamps enter us into the marriage chamber, Mat. 25. 10. *We must add to our faith vertue, and to vertue knowledg, and to knowledg temperance, &c.* 2 Pet. 1. 5. No link must be wanting of that sacred chain, but we must (as the same Apostle advises) *be holy in all manner of conversation*, 1 Pet. 1. 15.

4. AND now I would desire the Reader seriously to consider, whether he can upon good grounds tell himself that this so difficult (and yet so necessary) a work is effectually wrought in him. If it be, he is a happy man, and can with no pretence complain of any external want: (he that is fed with Manna, must be strangely perverse if he murmur for a belly-full of *leeks and onions*, Num. 11. 15.) But on the contrary he owes infinite thanks to God, that

that has spared him time for this important business, and did not put a period to his natural life, before he had begun a spiritual. For I fear there are among the best of us few of so entire an innocence; but they may remember some, either habits or acts of sin, in which it would have bin dreadful for them to have bin snatcht away. And then how comprehensive, how prolific a mercy has life bin to them, when it has carried eternity in its womb; and their continuance on earth has qualified them for heaven? Neither are such persons only to look on it as a blessing in the retrospect, as it relates to the past, but also in the present and future: which if they continue to employ well, do's not only confirm, but advance their reward. Besides God may please by them to glorify himself; make them instrumental to his service; which as it is the greatest honor, so it is also the greatest satisfaction to a good heart. He shews himself too mercenary that so longs for his reward, as to grow impatient of his attendances: he that loves God, thinks himself blest in the opportunity of doing work, as well as in receiving wages. Thus we see how life is under all these aspects a mercy to a pious  
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man, and such as not only obliges him to contentment, but gratitude.

5. But supposing a man cannot give this comfortable account of his life, but is conscious that he has spent it to a very different purpose, yet do's not that at all lessen his obligations to God, who meant he should have employ'd it better, and that he has not don so is merely his own fault. Nay indeed the worse his state is the greater mercy it is, that God has not made it irreversible, that he has not cut him off at once from the earth and the possibility of heaven too, but affords him yet a longer day, *if yet he will bear his voice*, Psal. 95. 7. This long-suffering is one of the most transcendent acts of divine goodness, and therefore the Apostle rightly stiles it *the riches of his goodness and long-suffering and forbearance*, Rom. 2. 4. and so at last we commonly acknowledg it, when we have worn it out, and can no longer receive advantage by it. What a value do's a gasping despairing soul put upon a small parcel of that time, which before he knew not how fast enough to squander? Oh that men would set the same estimate on it before: and then certainly as it would make them better husbands of it,

it, so it would also render them more thankful for it, *Accounting that the long-suffering of our Lord is Salvation*, 2 Pet.

3. 15.

6. INDEED did men but rightly compute the benefit of life upon this score, all secular encumbrances and uneasinesses of it would be over-whelmed, and stand only as Cyphers in the account. What a shame is it then that we should spend our breath in sighs and out-cries? which if we would employ to those nobler ends for which 'twas given, would supersede our complaints, and make us Confess we were well dealt with, that *our life* (tho bare and stript of all outward accessaries) *is given us for a prey*, Jer. 45. 5. And indeed he that has yet the great work of life to do, can very ill spare time or sorrow to bestow upon the regretting any temporal distress, since his whole stock is little enough to bewail and repair his neglects of his eternal concerns. Were our lives therefore destitute of all outward comfort, nay were they nothing but a scene of perpetual disasters, yet this one advantage of life would infinitely out-weigh them all, and render our murmuring very inexcusable.

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7. But God has not put this to the utmost trial, has never plac'd any man in such a state of unmixt calamity, but that he still affords many and great allaiies: he finds it fit sometimes to defalk some of our outward comforts, and perhaps im-bitter others, but he never takes all away. This must be acknowledged, if we do but consider how many things there are in which the whole race of mankind do in common partake. The four Elements, fire and water, air and earth, do not more make up every mans composition, then they supply his needs: the whole host of heaven, the Sun, Moon, and Stars, *Moses*, will tell us, are by *God divided to all nations under the whole heaven*, Deut. 4. 19. Those resplendent bodies, equally afford their light and influence to all. The sun shines as bright on the poor Cottage, as on the most magnificent Palace; and the stars have their benign Aspects, as well for him that is *behind the Mill*, as for him that *sitteth on the Throne*, Ex. 11. 5. Propriety (the great incendiary below) breeds no confusion in those celestial Orbs, but they are every mans treasure, yet no mans peculiar (as if they meant to teach us, that our love of appropriation *descends not from above*

SECT. III. Of Gods Unlimited Bounty. 37

*above*, Jam. 3.15. is no heavenly quality.)

8. AND as they make no distinction of the ranks and degrees of men, so neither do they of their virtues. Our Savior tells us, God causes *his Sun to rise on the good and on the evil, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust*, Mat. 5. 45. If now we descend lower to the sublunary creatures, they equally pay their homage to man, do not disdain the dominion of the poor, and submit to that of the rich, but shew us that their instinct extends to the whole nature. An horse draws the poor mans plough, as tamely as the Princes chariot, and the beggars hungry cur follows him with as much obsequiousness and affection as the pamper'd lap-dogs of the nicest Ladies. The sheep obey a poor mercenary shepherd as well as they did the Daughters of the wealthy *Laban*, Gen. 29. 9. or of *Jethro* a Prince, Exod. 2. 26. and as willingly yield their fleece to clothe *Lazarus*, as to make purple for *Dives*. And as animals, so vegetables are as communicative of their qualities to one man as another. The corn nourishes, the fruits refresh, the flowers delight, the simples cure the poor man as well as the rich.

9. BUT I foresee it will be objected,  
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that these natural priviledges are insignificant, because they are evacuated by those positive laws which bound propriety, and that therefore tho one man could use the creatures as well as another, yet every man has them not to use. I answer, that for some of the things I have mention'd, they are still in their native latitude, cannot be inclosed or monopoliz'd. The most ravenous oppressor could never yet lock up the sun in his chest: *he that laies house to house and land to land, till there be no place*, Esay 5. 8. cannot inclose the common air: and the like may be said of divers of the rest: so that there are some (and those no mean) blessings, which continue still the indefeisible right of mankind in general.

10. As for those other things which are liable to the restrictive terms of *meum* and *tuum*, 'tis not to be deni'd but there is vast difference in the dispensing them; as great as *Nathans* parable describes, when he speaks of the numerous flocks of the rich man, and the *single ewe lamb of the poor*, 2 Sam. 12. 2. yet there is scarce any so deplorably indigent, but that by one means or other, he has or may have the necessary supports of life. Perhaps they  
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fall not into his lap by birth-right and inheritance, yet they are acquirable by labor and industry, which is perhaps the better tenure. They cannot it may be arrive to *Sodoms fulness of bread*, yet if they have not her *abundance of Idleness*, Ez. 16. 40. they commonly need not want that, which was the hight of *Agurs wish*, *food convenient*, Pro. 30. 8. 'Tis true indeed, if they will fold their hands in their bosom, if with *Solomons Sluggard*, *they will not plough by reason of the cold*, they must take his fate in the summer, as they have his ease in the winter, *they may beg in harvest*, and have nothing, Prov. 20. 4. But then 'tis visible they are the Authors of their own necessities. And indeed to men of such lazy careless natures, 'tis hard to say, what degree of Gods bounty can keep them from want, since we often see the fairest fortunes dissipated as well by the supine negligence, as the riotous prodigality of the owners. And therefore if men will be idle, they are not to accuse God, but themselves if they be indigent.

II. BUT then there is one case wherein men seem more inevitably expos'd, and that is when by age, sickness, or decrepitness, they are disabled from work,  
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or when their family is too numerous for their work to maintain. And this indeed seems the most forlorn state of poverty: yet God has provided for them also, by assigning such persons to the care of the rich: nay he has put an extraordinary mark of favor on them, given them the honor of being his proxies and representatives, made them letters of Attorney (as it were) to demand relief in his name, and upon his account. And tho'tis too true, that even that Authority will not prevail with many of the rich to open their purses, yet even in this Age of frozen charity, there are still some who remember upon what terms they received their wealth, and employ it accordingly. And tho the number of them is not so great as were to be wisht, yet there are in all parts some scattered here and there like *Cities of refuge* in the Land, Deut. 19. 2. to which these poor distressed creatures may flee for succour. And I think I may say, that between the legal provisions that are made in this case, and voluntary contributions, there are not very many that want the things that are of absolute necessity: and we know St. *Paul* comprizes those in a small compass, *food and raiment*, and proposes  
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them as sufficient materials of Content, *1 Tim. 6. 8.* I say not this to contract any mans bowels, or lessen his compassions to such poor wretches. For how much soever they lend, I wish as *Joab* did in another case to *David*, the Lord *increase it a hundred fold*, *2 Sam. 24. 3.* I only urge it as an evidence of the assertion I am to prove, that no man is so prætermitted by God, or his disposal of temporals, but that even he that seems the most abandon'd has a share in his Providence, and consequently cannot justly murmur, since even this state which is the highest instance of human indigence, is not without its receipts from God.

12. But the number in this form are but few, compar'd to those in a higher; for between this & the highest affluence, how many intermedial degrees are there, in which men partake not only of the necessities, but comforts of life; that have not only food and raiment, but their distinction of Holy-day and Working day, fare and apparel? He that is but one step advanced from beggery has so much, he that has got to a second has more then is necessary, and so every degree rises in plenty till it comes to vanity and excess.

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and even there too there are gradual risings, some having so much fewel for luxury, that they are at as great a loss for invention, as others can be for materials, and complain that there are no farther Riots left for them to essay. How many are there who have so cloi'd and glutted their senses, that they want some other inlets for plesure, and with the rich man in the Gospel, are in distress where to bestow their abundance?

13. AND sure such as these cannot deny that they have receiv'd good things, yet generally there are none less contented; which is a clear demonstration that our repinings proceed not from any defect of bounty in God, but from the malignant temper of our own hearts. And as it is an easier thing to satisfy the cravings of an hungry, then to cure the nauseous recoilings of a surfeited stomach; so certainly the discontents of the poor, are much easier allai'd then those of the rich. The indigence of the one has contracted his desires, and has taught him not to look farther then a little beyond bare necessities, so that a moderate Alms satisfies, and a liberal transports him: but he who by a perpetual repletion has his desires stretcht  
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and extended, is capable of no such satisfaction. When his enjoiments forestall all particular pursuits, and he knows not upon what to fasten his next wish; yet even then he has some confus'd unform'd appetites, and thinks himself miserable because he cannot tell what would make him more happy. And yet this is that envid state which men with so much greediness aspire to. Every man looks on it as the top of felicity, to have nothing more to wish in the World. And yet alas even that when attain'd, would be their torment. Let men never think then that contentment is to be caught by long and foreign chaces; he is likeliest to find it who sits at home, and duly contemplates those Blessings which God has brought within his reach, of which every man has a fair proportion, if he will advert to it.

14. For besides these external accessions (of which the meanest have some, the middle sort a great deal, and the uppermost rather too much) man is a principality within himself, and has in his composure so many excellent impresses of his Makers power and goodness, that he need not ask leave of any exterior thing to be happy, if he know but aright how

to value himself: the very meanest part of him, his body, is a piece of admirable workmanship, of a most incomprehensible contrivance, as the Psalmist saies, *he is fearfully and wonderfully made*; and 'tis astonishing to think of what a symmetry of parts this beautiful Fabric is made up. Nor are they only for shew, but use: every member, every limb is endowed with a particular faculty to make it serviceable to the whole; and that admirable texture of veins and arteries, sinews and muscles, nerves and tendons, none are superfluous, but some way or other contribute to vegetation, sense, or motion. Nay the most noble and most useful parts are all of them double, not only as a reserve in case of misadventure of one part; but also as an instance of the bounty of the Donor. And indeed it is observable of *Galen* in his Writings, that after he had taken great care to exempt himself and all of his Profession from taking notice of the Deity, by saying, That to discourse concerning the Gods, was the task of speculative Philosophers; yet coming to write *de usu partium*, and considering the frame of humane Bodies, and therein discovering the wonderful contrivance of e-  
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very part in reference to its self, and also to the whole, their strength, agility, and various movement, infinitely surpassing the powers of all Mechanic Engines, he seems to have had the fate we read of *Saul* in holy Scripture, and against his genius and purpose, to become a Prophet, breaking frequently out into Hymns and sacred raptures; saying, these Mysteries are more Divine than the *Samothracian* or *Eleusini-an*; and confessing they both strictly require, and infinitely excel the low returns of human praise. But beyond the fabric of parts as organic, what an extract of wonder are our senses, those *five operations of the Lord*, as the son of *Syrach* rightly (and by way of eminence) stiles them, *Ec.* 17. 5? By these we draw all outward objects to ourselves. What were the beauties of the Universe to us, if we had not sight to behold them, or the most melodious sounds, if we had not hearing? and so of the rest. And yet these are not only generally given, but also preserv'd to the greater part of men: and perhaps would be to more, did not our base undervaluing of common mercies, force God sometimes to instruct us in their worth, by making us feel what it is to want them.

15. MULTITUDE of refreshments also God has provided for our Bodies, particularly that of sleep, of which he has bin so considerate, as in his distributions of time, to make a solemn allotment for it: yet who almost when he lies down considers the mercy, or when he rises refresh't, rises thankful also? But if our rest at any time be interrupted by the cares of our mind, or pains of our bodies, then, (and not till then) we consider, that 'tis *God who gives his beloved sleep*, Psal. 127. 2. and think it a blessing worth our esteem. Thus it is with health, strength, and every thing else, we despise it whilst we have it, and impatiently desire it whilst we have it not; but in the interim sure we cannot complain, that Gods hand is shortned towards us, when in the ordinary course of his Providence we commonly enjoy these Mercies many years, which we find so much miss of, if they be withdrawn but for a few hours. And indeed, there is not a greater instance of human pravity then our senseless contempt of Blessings, merely because they are customary; which in true reason is an argument why we should prize them the more. When we deal with men, we discern it well



well enough, he that gives me once 100 pounds, I account not so much my Benefactor, as if he made it my annual revenue; yet God must lose his thanks, by multiplying his favors; and his benefits grow more invisible by their being always before us.

16. BUT the Body (with its enjoyment) is but the lowest instance of Gods bounty, 'tis but a decent case for that inestimable Jewel he has put in it: the Soul, like the Ark, is the thing for which this whole Tabernacle was framed, and that is a spark of Divinity in which alone it is that God accomplished his design of *making man in his own image*, Gen. 1. 26. 'Twould be too long to attempt an exact survey of its particular Excellencies. The mere intellectual powers wherewith it is indued, have exercised the curiosity and raised the admiration of the great contemplations of Nature in all Ages; yet after all, of so subtile composure is the soul, that it is inscrutable even to itself: and tho the simplest man knows he has the faculties of Imagination, Apprehension, Memory, Reflecting; yet the learnedst cannot assign where they are seated, or by what means they operate. 'Tis enough

to us that we have them, and many excellent uses for them; one whereof (and a most necessary one) is a thankful reflexion on the goodness of God who gave them. He might have made us in the very lowest form of Creatures, insensible stocks or stones; or if he had advanc'd us a step higher, he might have fixt us among mere Animals, made us perhaps of the noxious, at best of the tamer sort of beasts; but he has plac'd us in the highest rank of visible creatures, and not only given us *Dominion over the works of his hands* Psal. 8. 6. but has given us Reason wherewith to manage that Sovereignty, without which we had only bin the more masterless sort of brutes.

17. YET still the Soul is to be consider'd in a higher notion, that of its Immortality and capacity of endless Bliss: and here indeed it owns its extraction, and is an Image of the first Being, whose felicity is coexistent with himself; this, as it is the most transcendent accomplishment of our Nature, so it is most universal. Whatever disparity there may be between man and man in other respects, yet in this all are equal. The poor beggar at the gate has a Soul as capacious of Eter-

eternal happiness, as he whose *crumbs* he begs for (nay sometimes better prepar'd for it, as that parable shews, Luke 16. 11.) And tho the dignities of earth are the prize of the rich and noble, the subtle and designing; yet heaven is as easily mounted from the dung-hill as the throne, and an honest simplicity will sooner bring us thither, then all the Machiavelian policy. Nay God has not only design'd us to so glorious an end, but has don all on his part to secure us of it, sent his Son to lead us the way, his spirit to quicken us in it. We need not dispute how universal this is; 'tis sure it concerns all to whom I am now speaking, those that are within the pale of the Church: and if it should prove confin'd only to them, the more peculiar is their obligation, that are thus singled out from the rest of the world; and the greater ought to be their thankfulness. The heathen Philosopher made it matter of his solemn acknowledgment to fortune, that he was born a Grecian and not a Barbarian: and sure the advantages of our Christianity are of a much higher strain, and ought to be infinitely more celebrated. The Apostle we find often applauding this glorious privilege, as that

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which makes us *fellow citizens with the Saints, and of the household of God*, Ephes. 3. 19. nay which elevates us to a higher state, *the adoption of sons*, Gal. 4. 5. not only *Sons*, but *Heirs also of God and joint Heirs with Christ*, Rom. 8. 17. And what ambition is there so greedy which this will not satisfy? yet this is our common state, the birth-right of our regeneration, if we do not degrade our selves, and with *Esau* basely sell our title.

18. AND now methinks every man may interrogate himself in the same form, wherein *Jonadab* did *Amnon*, 2 Sam. 13. 4. *Why art thou, being the Kings son, thus lean from day to day?* Why should a Person who is adopted by the King of Kings, thus languish and pine? What is there below the sun worthy his notice, much less his desires, that hath a Kingdom above it? Certainly did we but know how to estimate our selves upon this account, 'twere impossible for us with such sordid condescensions to court every petty worldly interest, and so impatiently vex our selves when we cannot attain it. Alas how unworthily do we bear the name of Christians, when that which carried the Forefathers of our Faith thro the most fiery trials,

als, cannot support us under the disappointment of any extravagant desire? They had such *respect to the recompence of the reward*, Heb. 11. 26. as made them cheerfully expose their Fame to ignominy, their Goods to rapine, their Bodies to the most exquisite tortures, and their Lives to death. Yet the same hopes cannot work us to any tolerable degree of patience, when we suffer but the smallest diminution in any of these. What shall we say? is Heaven grown less valuable or Earth more then it was then? No surely, but we are more infatuated in our estimates, we have so long abetted the rivalry of the hand-maid, that the Mistress, like *Sarah*, appears despicable. Like *Jonah* we sit down sullen upon the withering of a gourd, never considering that God has provided us a better shelter, *a building of God eternal in the Heavens*, 2 Cor. 5. 1. Indeed there can be no temporal destitution so great, which such an expectation cannot make supportable. Were we in *Jobs* condition sitting upon a dunghil, and scraping our selves with a potsheard, yet as long as we say with him *our Redeemer liveth*, Job. 19. 25, we have all reason to say with him also, *blessed be the name of the*

*Lord*, Ch. 1. 21. What a madness is it then for us to expose our selves to be pierc'd and wounded by every temporal adversity, who have so impenetrable an armour? nay what an ungrateful contumely is it to that goodness of God, to shew that we cannot make him a counterpoise to the most trivial secular satisfaction? on which account sure he may again take up that exprobrating complaint we find in the Prophet, *A goodly price that I was valued at them*, Zac. 11. 13.

19. But how mean soever he is in our eyes, tho *Christ* seem the same to us in his glory which he did in his abjection, to have no beauty that we should desire him; yet he puts another rate upon himself, and tells us that he *that loves Father or Mother, Son or Daughter more then me, is not worthy of me*, Mat. 10. 37. Now our love and our joy are passions coincident, and therefore whatever we joy more in then we do in him, we may be presum'd to love better; and if he cannot endure the competition of those more ingenuous objects of our love he there mentions, how will he suffer that of our vanities, our childish wanton appetites? And yet those are the things after which we so impatiently

ently rave. For I believe I may truly affirm, that if there were a scrutiny made into all the discontents of mankind; for one that were fastned upon any great considerable calamity, there are many that are founded only in the irregularity of our own desires.

20. By what has bin said we may justly conclude in the Prophets phrase, *God hath not bin to us a wilderness, a land of darkness*, Jer. 2. 31. but has graciously dispenc'd to us in all our interests. Yet the instances here given are only common, such as relate to all, or at least the far greater part of mankind: but what volumes might be made, should every man set down his own particular experiences of mercy? In that case 'twould be no extravagant Hyperbole we find; Joh. 22. 25. *That even the world it self could not contain the books which should be written.* God knows our memories are very frail, and our observations slight in this point: yet abstracting from all the forgotten or neglected favors, what vast Catalogues may every man make to himself, if he would but yet recollect, what effects he has had of Gods bounty in giving, of his providence in protecting, of his grace in restraining,

straining and exciting of his patience in forbearing? And certainly all these productions of the divine goodness were never design'd to die in the birth. The Psalmist will tell us, *The Lord hath so don his marvellous works, that they ought to be had in remembrance*, Ps. lxxxi. 3. Let every man then make it his daily care to recount to himself the wonders God hath don, as for the children of men in general, so for himself in particular. When the Israelites murmured under their bondage, *Pharaoh* imputes it to their idleness, and prescribes them more work, as the readiest cure: a piece indeed of inhuman Tyranny in him, but may with equity and success be practiced by us upon our selves. When we find our appetites mutinous, complaining of our present condition, let us set our selves to work, impose it as a task upon our selves to recollect the many instances of Gods mercies. And surely if we do it sincerely, and with intention, we cannot have past thro half our stages, before our sullen murmurs will be beat out of countenance, and retire with shame, when they are confronted with such a cloud of witnessses, such signal testimonies of Gods good-



goodness to us: for when we have muster'd up all our little grievances, most critically examin'd all our wants, we shall find them very unproportionable to our comforts, and to our receipts: in which comparative notion, the next Section is to consider them.

## SECT. I V.

*Of the Surplafage of our Enjoyments  
above our Sufferings.*

1. **T**O regulate our estimate of those things which we either enjoy or suffer, there are three precedent queries to be made: the first of their number or plenty, the second of their weight, the third of their constancy and continuance; for according as they partake more of these properties every good is more good, and every evil is more evil. It will therefore be our best method of trial in the present case, to compare our blessings and our calamities in these three respects.

2. **A**ND first in that of plenty, the mercies of God are the source of all our good, are set out to us in holy scripture in the most *superlative* strein, They are *multitude*, Psal. 102. 20. *Plenteous redemption*, Psal. 130. 7. *as high as the heaven*, Psal. 103. 11. *He fills all things living with plenteousness*, Psal. 145. 16. His mercies indeed

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deed are such as come not within the compass of number, but stretch themselves to infinity, and are best represented by such a calculation as God made to *Abraham*, when he shew'd him the numerousness of his posterity by the innumerableness of the stars, Gen. 15. 5. Were there but a single mercy apportion'd to each minute of our lives, the sum would arise very high: but how is our Arithmetic confounded, when every minute has more than we can distinctly number? For besides the original stock mention'd in the last section, and the accession of new bounty, the giving us somewhat which we had not before; what an accumulative mercy is it, the preserving what we have? We are made up of so many pieces, have such varieties of interests, spiritual, temporal, public, and private; for our selves, for our friends, and dependants; that it is not a confused general regard that will keep all these in security one moment. We are like a vast building, which costs as much to maintain, as to erect. And indeed considering the corruptibleness of our materials; our preservation is no less a work of omnipotence, then our first forming: nay perhaps 'tis rather a greater.

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Our original clay tho it had no aptness, yet it had no averfions to the receiving a human form; but was in the hand of the potter to make it what he pleased; but we now have principles of decay within us, which vehemently tend to dissolution; we want the supplies of feveral things without us, the failing whereof return us again to our dust. Nay we do not only need the aid, but we fear the hostility of outward things. That very air which sometimes refreshes us, may at another starve and freeze us: that which warms and comforts, has also a power of consuming us. Yea that very meat which nourishes, may choak and stifle us. In a word, there is no creature so despicable, so inconsiderable, which may not sometimes serve us, and which may not at any time (if God permit) ruine us. Now whence is it that we so constantly, so frequently find the good, the benign efficacy of these things, and so seldom, so rarely the evil? whence I say is it, but from the active unwearied providence, which draws forth the better properties of the creatures for our use, and restrains the worser for our security? which with a particular adverte[n]ce watches not only over every Person,

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son, but over every several concern of that person. And how astonishing a contemplation is this? If the mere ebbing and flowing of the sea, put the Philosopher into such an extasy, that he flung himself into it because he could not comprehend the inscrutable cause of it; in what perpetual raptures of admiration may we be, who have every minute within us, and about us, more and greater wonders, and those too in our favor, when we deserve rather the divine power should exert it self in our destruction?

3. BUT alas our danger from the visible creature, is little compar'd with those from the spirits of darkness. *We wrestle not only with flesh and blood, but with Principalities and Powers, with spiritual wickedness, &c.* Eph. 6. 12. So inveterate is the enmity between the Serpent and the seed of the Woman in general, that he watches all advantages against us, not only in our souls, but even our bodies, our goods, and in every part of our concerns: Thus we see he not only assaulted *Job's* soul by the wicked insinuations of his Wife, (with more effect) his body with boiles and sores, his possessions by the *Chaldeans* and *Sabeans*, and the i-

mages of himself, his dearest Children, by  
 a wind from the wilderness. Job. 1. And  
 can we think his malice is now worn out ?  
 no surely he still wishes as ill to mankind  
 as ever, and we should soon see the woful  
 effects of it, did not the same power which  
 let him loose for *Jobs* trial, restrain him  
 for our safety. Nay had he but power to  
 affright, tho not to hurt us, even that  
 would make our lives very uncomfortable.  
 We cannot hear the relation of Sprights  
 or apparitions, but our blood chills  
 upon it, and a horror runs thro our veins :  
 what should we then do if he should make  
 his night-walks thro our chambers, and  
 with his illusory terrors disturb our rest ?  
 Yet all this and much more he would do,  
 if God did not chain up this *old Dragon*,  
 Rev. 20. Nay if he were not at the ex-  
 pence of a guard about us, and those no  
 less then Angels. I shall not dispute whe-  
 ther every person hath not his peculiar  
 Guardian: for tho many have not impro-  
 bably asserted it, we have ground enough  
 of acquiescence in the general affirmation  
 of the Apostle, *that they are all ministering*  
*Spirits, sent forth to minister for them, who*  
*shall be heires of Salvation*, Heb. 1. 14.  
 And now if the Reader please to sum  
 up

up how many are his concerns, and how many are the dangers which await him in them all, he cannot sure render the account of those mercies which preserve the one, and divert the other, in any other phrase then that of the Psalmist, *They are more then I am able to expresse*, Psa. 40. 7.

4. WE may now challenge the most miserable, or the most querulous man living, to produce causes of complaint, proportionable to those of thanks-giving. He that has the greatest stock of calamities, can never vye with the heaps of benefits; the disproportion is greater then that of the Armies of *Ahab* and *Benhadad*, 1 Kings. 20. 27. whereof the one was like *two little flocks of Kids*, the other filled the country. God has told us that *he afflicts not willingly, nor grieves the children of men*, Lam. 3. 33. whereas on the contrary, he *delighteth in mercy*. Mich. 7. 18. We may judge by our selves which he is likeliest often to repere; those acts which he doth with regret and reluctancy, or those which he do's with plesure and delight. But we need no inferences where we have the attestation of experience. Let every man therefore make this his judge in this case, let him every night  
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recollect, how many things within and about him he is concern'd in, and consider how many of those have bin preserv'd intire to him, still accounting every thing so continued as a new donation. If he begin with his Spiritual state, 'tis too possible he may sometimes find he has lost his innocence, committed some, perhaps many sins: but even in these he will find cause to justify God, if he do but recollect with what inward checks and admonitions, and outward restraints, God has endeavored to bridle him. If he will break thro those fences, that do's not at all derogate from the mercy of God which so guarded him, but it rather illustrates his goodness, that after so many quenchings of his Spirit, do's yet continue its influence. So that even he that has the most deplorably violated his integrity, is yet to confess that Gods purpose was to have preserv'd it intire: and he might really so have kept it, had he compli'd with those aids which were afforded him. But in temporal concerns we are not so apt to undermine our selves, and therefore shall much more rarely find we have suffer'd detriment in them, then in our spiritual; but are there ordinarily like to meet with a  
better



better account. Let a man therefore consider what is lacking to him of all the secular good things he had in the morning, and tell me whether for the most part he may not give such an account, as the *Israelitish* officers did of their men after the slaughter of the *Midianites*; *that he hath not lost one.* Num. 31. 39. Or if somtimes he do suffer a diminution, yet at the worst he will find that many more good things have bin preserv'd to him, then have bin taken from him. A man may perhaps meet with some dammage in his estate, yet 'tis manifold odds that that dammage is but partial, and that he has still more left then is lost. Or if it be more intire; yet if he have his health, his limbs, his senses, his friends, and all things beside his estate left him, so that for one thing he has lost, he still retains a multitude, he may say of it as the Disciples of the few Loaves, *what is this among so many,* Mat. 14. 17. *Aristippus* being bemoan'd for the loss of a Farm, repli'd with some sharpness upon his Condoler, you have but one field, and I have yet three left, why should I not rather grieve for you? intimating that a man is not so much to estimate what he has lost, as what he has left. A piece  
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of wisdom which if we would transcribe, we might quickly convince ourselves, that even in our most adverse estate there are as *Elijah* speaks, *more with us then against us*, 2 King. 6. 16. that our enjoiments are more then our sufferings, and God acts of grace do far out-number those of his severity.

5. AND as they do out-number, so also do they out-weigh them. The mercies we receive from God are (as the last Section has shew'd) of the greatest importance; the most substantial solid goods; and the greatest of all, I mean those which concern our eternal state, are so firmly fixt on us, that unless we will voluntarily quit our clame, 'tis not in the power of men or devils to defeat us. Light bodies are easily blown away by every gust of wind, but this *weight of glory*, as the Apostle calls it, 2 Cor. 4. 17. continues firm and stable, is proof against all storms, like the *shadow of a great rock in a weary Land*. Isai. 32. 2. Those dark adumbrations we have of it, might have served to refresh and deceive the tediousness of our pilgrimage, and therefore the most formidable calamities of this life are below all mesures of comparison with this hope of our calling; *this riches of the glory of our inheritance*.  
Eph.

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Eph. 3. 16. The heaviest and most pressing of our afflictions are to that, *but like the small dust of the balance*: Esa. 40. 15. so that if we should here stop our inquisition, we have a sufficient resolution of the present question, and must conclude, that God has given us an abundant counterpoise of all, we either do or can suffer here.

6. I F therefore there be any so forlorn as to temporals, that he can fetch thence no evidence of Gods fatherly care of him, yet this one consideration may solve his doubts, and convince him that he is not abdicated by him. We read of no gifts *Abraham gave Isaac*, yet to the sons of the concubins 'tis said he did, Gen. 25. 6. It had bin a very fallacious inference, if *Isaac* should have concluded himself neglected, because his far greater portion was but in reversions. And it will be the same in any of us, if we argue an unkindness from any temporal wants who have the entail of an eternal inheritance. But surely *God do's not leave himself without witness*, Act. 14. 17. even in secular things; there is no man breathing but has some blessings of his left hand, as well as his right, as I have already mention'd:

and unless it be some few prodigies of Calamity, in whose punishment or patience God designs signally to glorify himself, there are none who enjoy not greater comforts of life than those they want, I mean such as are really greater, tho perhaps, to their prejudicate fancies they do not appear so. Thus in point of health, if a man be disaffected in one part, yet all the rest of his body may be (and often is) well; or if he have a complication, and have more than one disease, yet there is no man that has all, or half so many as are incident to human bodies, so that he is comparatively more healthy than sick. So again it is not very common for a man to lose a limb, or sense; the generality of men keep them to their last; and they who do, have in that an overbalance to most outward adversities; and even they who are so unhappy to lose one, yet commonly keep the rest; at least the Major part: or if at any time any man is left a mere breathing trunk, yet it is by such stupifying diseases as dead the sense, or such mortal ones as soon take them away; and so the remedy overtakes the Malady. Besides it pleases God very often, to make  
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compensation for the want of one member or faculty by improving the use of another. We have seen feet supply all the necessary uses of hands to those who have had none; and it is a thing of daily observation that men that are blind, have the greater internal light: have their intellects more vigorous and active, by their abstractions from visible objects.

7. Thus also it is in the matter of wealth; he that is forced to get his bread by the sweat of his browes, 'tis true he cannot have those delicacies wherewith rich men abound, yet his labor helps him to a more poignant; more savory sauce than a whole Colledg of Epicures can compound. His hunger gives a higher gust to his dry crust, then the surfeited stomach can find in the most costly, most elaborate mixtures: so verifying the observation of Solomon, *the full soul loatheth the hony comb, but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet*, Prov. 27. 7. He cannot indeed stretch himself upon his bed of Ivory, Am. 6. 4. yet his sleeps are sounder then those that can. The Wise man tells us, and experience do's so too, that *the sleep of a laboring man is sweet*, Eccles. 5. 12. He is not clothed Gorgeously,

has not the splendor of glittering apparel, so neither has he the care of contriving it, the fears of being fore-stal'd in a new invention, or any of those unmanly sollicitudes which attend that vanity. He has the proper genuine use of clothing; the preventing shame and cold, and is happily determin'd to that which the wiser men of the world have voluntarily chosen. To conclude; he has one advantage beyond all these; his necessities rescue him from idleness, and all its consequent temptations; which is so great a benefit, that if rich men be not their own task-masters as his wants are his, if they do not provide themselves of business, that one want of theirs is infinitely more deplorable then all his: and he is not only happy comparatively with himself, in having better things then he wants, but with them also.

8. IF we come now to reputation and fame, the account will be much the same, he that is eminent in the world for some great atchievement, is set up as an object of every mans remark; when as his excellencies on the one hand are visible, so his faults and blemishes are on the other. And as human frailty makes it too  
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probable; these later will be really more, so human envy makes it sure that they shall be more precisely, more curiously observed, and more loudly blazon'd. So that upon the whole, a good quiet security, tho it be not the road to glory, yet is the likeliest fence against infamy. And indeed he that can keep up the repute of a sober integrity within his own private sphere, need not envy the triumphant fallies of others, which often meet with a fatal turn at the later end of the day. But 'twill be said that even that more moderate sort of reputation is not every mans portion, but that many lie under great ignominy and scandals. I shall here ask whether these be just or unjust: If they be just they belong not to our present subject, which relates only to those inflictions which are the effects of Gods immediate providence not of our own crimes: for I never doubted but that by those we may divest our selves of any, nay of all the good things God has design'd us. But if the obloquy be unjust, 'tis probable that 'tis taken up only by ill men, and that the good pass a more equitable sentence; and then surely the attestation of a few such, is able to outweigh

weigh a multitude of the others. And in this case a man may not only find patience but plesure in reproches. *Socrates* lookt with trouble and jealousy on himself when ill men commended him, saying, What ill have I don? and sure a Christian has a farther reason to be pleas'd with their revilings, they being his security against the *woe* pronounc'd to those *whom all men speak well of*, Luke 6. 26. But somtimes it happens, that even good men are seduc'd, and either by the artifices of the wicked, or their own too hasty credulity, give credit to unjust reports. And this I confess is a sharp trial to the injur'd person, yet even this cannot often be universal; there can scarce be any innocence so forlorn but that there may be opportunities of clearing it to some or other, and by them propagating it to more, and if the cloud ever come to be dispers'd their fame will appear with the brighter luster. But if none of this happen, they have yet a certain and more blessed retreat, even an appeal to the unerring judg, who never beholds us with more approbation, then when we are under the unjust condemnation of men. Indeed we have then a double tie upon him,  
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not only his justice but his pity is concern'd in our cause. God particularly owns himself as the refuge of the oppressed, and there is scarce a sharper and more sensible oppression then this of Calumny : yet even this proves advantage, whilst it procures Gods immediate patronage, makes us the objects of his more peculiar care and compassion, who can *make our righteousness as clear as the light*, Psa. 37. 6. if he see it fit; but if in his wisdom he chuse not that for us, 'tis comfort enough for us that we have approv'd it to him. 'Twas *Elkanahs* question to *Hannah* in her disconsolation, *Am not I better to thee then ten Sons?* 1 Sam. 1. 8. And sure we may say the like of Gods approbation, that 'tis better to us, I say not then ten, but ten thousand Eulogies of men. The very Echo of it in the testimony of a good conscience is an unspeakable comfort, and this voice sounds more audibly, more sweetly, among the loudest, the harshest accusations of men. So that we see even this assault too is not without its guard, & these *waters of Marah*, Exo. 15. 23. may be render'd not only wholesom but pleasant.

9. I have now instanced in the three most general concerns of human life, the  
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Body, Goods, and Fame, to which heads may be reduced most of the afflictions incident to our out-ward state; as far as immediately concerns our selves. But there is no man stands so single in the world, but he has some relations or friends in which he thinks himself interested, and many times those oblique strokes which wound us thro them, are as painful as the more direct: yet here also God is ordinarily pleas'd to provide some allaiies, if we would but take notice of them. He who has had one friend die; has ordinarily divers others surviving; or if he have not that, usually God raises him up others. 'Tis true we cannot have a succession of Fathers and Mothers, yet we often have of other friends that are no less helpful to us: and indeed there are scarce in any thing more remarkable evidences of Providence, then in this particular. *He that is able out of stones to raise up children to Abraham*, Mat. 3. 9. do's many times by as unexpected a production supply friends to the desolate. But we do sometimes lose our friends while they are living, they withdraw their kindness which is the soul of friendship: and if this happen by our own demerit, we can accuse  
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neither God nor them for it: nor can we rationally expect that God shall provide supplies, when we wilfully despoile our selves. But when they are unkind without provocation, then is the season for his interposition, who uses to take up *those whom Father and Mother forsake*, Ps. 27. 10. and we frequently see signal proofs of his care in exciting the compassions of other friends and relatives, or perhaps of mere strangers. Nay sometimes God makes the inhumanity of a mans relations, the occasion of his advantage. Thus the barbarous malice of *Josephs* brethren was the first step to his Dominion over Egypt. And it is a common observation in Families, that the most discountenanc'd child oft makes better proof, then the dearling.

10. WE are yet liable to a third affliction by the calamity of our friends, which by the Sympathy of Kindness presses us no less (perhaps more) sensibly then our own: but then 'tis to be consider'd that theirs are capable of the same allaying circumstances that ours are, and God has the same arts of alleviating their burdens; so that we have the same arguments for acquiescence in their sufferings

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that we have in our own, and shall do a more friendly office in impressing those upon them, then in the most passionate adopting their sorrows.

II. THE last and greatest discomfort from friends, is that of their own: and if ever we may be allow'd that disconsolate strein of the Prophet, Esa. 22. 4. *Turn away from me, I will weep bitterly, labor not to comfort me*; this seems to be the time: yet even this *vally of Achor is not without a door of hope*, Hof. 2. 15. A vicious person may be recalled, multitudes have bin; so that as long as God continues life, we ought no more to deposite our hope, then to quit our endeavor. Besides there are few that make this complaint that have not something to balance, or at least to lighten it. I shall instance in that relation which is the nearest and most tender, that of a Parent. He that has one bad child may have divers good. If he have but one virtuous 'tis a very great mercy, and 'tis another that he may be the better taught to value it by the opposition of the contrary. But if any be so unhappy as to have many children, and *all to consume his eies and grieve his heart*, 1 Sam. 2. 3 3. it may be a seasonable reflexion for

for him to examin how far he has contributed to it either by *Elies* fond indulgence, or by a remiss and careless education: or which is worst of all, by his most impious example. If any, or all of those be found the cause, he is not so much to seek for allaiies to his grief, as for pardon of his sin: and when he has penitently retracted his own fault, he may then have better ground of hope that God may reform those of his children. In the mean time he may look on his own affliction in them as Gods discipline on him, and gather at least this comfort from it, that his heavenly Father has more care of him, then he had of his; and do's not leave him uncorrected.

12. THUS we see in all the concerns (which are the most common and important of human life, and wherein the justest of our complaints are usually founded) there is such a temperature and mixture, that the good do's more then equal the ill, and not only in the grosser bulk, when our whole state is weighed together, but in every single branch of it; God having herein dealt with this little world Man, as he has don with the greater, wherein he is observ'd to have

furnished every country with Specific remedies for their peculiar diseases. I have only given these short hints by way of essay and pattern for the Readers contemplation, which when he shall have extended to all those more minute particulars wherein he is especially concern'd, more curiously compar'd his sufferings with his alliaies and comforts; I cannot doubt but he will own himself an instance of the truth of the present Thesis, and confes; that he has much more cause of thankfulness then complaint.

13. THIS I say supposing his afflictions to be of those more solid and considerable sorts I have before mention'd. But how many are there who liave few or none of such, who seem to be seated in the land of *Goshen*, in a place exempt from all the plagues that infect their Neighbors? And those one would think should give a ready suffrage to this conclusion, as having no temptation to oppugn it; yet I doubt 'tis far otherwise, and that such men are of all the most unsatisfied. For tho they have no crosses of Gods imposing, they usually create a multitude to themselves. And here we may say with *David*, *it is better to fall into the hand of God, then in-*  
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to the hand of man, 2 Sam. 24. 14. 'tis easier to bear the afflictions God sends, then those we make to our selves. His are limited both for quantity and quality, but our own are as boundless as those extravagant desires from which they spring.

14. AND this is the true cause why contentment is so much a stranger to those who have all the outward causes of it, they have no definite measure of their desires; 'tis not the supply of all their real wants will serve their turn, their appetites are precarious and depend upon contingencies. They hunger not because they are empty, but because others are full. Many a man could have liked his own portion well enough, had he not seen another have something he liked better. Nay even the most inconsiderable things acquire a value by being anothers, when we despise much greater of our own. *Ahab* might well have satisfied himself with the Kingdom of *Israel*, had not *Naboths* poor plot lain in his eye: but so raving were his desires after it, that he disrelishes all the pomps of a Crown, yea the ordinary refreshment of Nature, *can eat no bread* till he have that to furnish him with Sallads, 1 King. 21. 2. And how many  
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are there now adaies whose clothes fit uneasy, if they see another have had but the luck to be a little more ingeniously vain; whose meat is unsavory if they have seen but a greater rarity, a newer cookery at anothers Table; in a word who make o-ther peoples excesses the standard of their own felicities.

15. NOR are our appetites only excited thus by our outward objects, but precipitated and hurried on by our inward lusts. The proud man so longs for homage and adoration, that nothing can please him if that be wanting. *Haman* can find no gust in all the sensualities of the Persian Court, because a poor despicable Jew denies his abaisance, Est. 15. 13. The lustful so impatiently pursues his impure designs, that any difficulty he meets in them, makes him pine and languish like *Amnon*, who could no way recover his own health but by violating his sisters honor, 2 Sam. 13. 14. The revengeful labors under an Hydropic thirst till he have the bloud of his enemy: all the liquor of *Ab-soloms* sheep-sheering could not quench his, without the slaughter of his brother, 2 Sam. 1. 29. And thus every one of our passions keeps us upon the rack till they have ob-



obtained their designs. Nay when they have, the very emtiness of those acquisitions is a new torment, and puts us upon fresh pursuits. Thus between the impetuoufness of our desires, and the emtiness of our enjoiments, we still *disquiet our selves in vain*, Psa. 39. 7. And whilst we have such cruel task-masters, 'tis not strange to find us groaning under our burdens. If we will indulge to all our vicious or foolish appetites, think our lives bound up with them, and solícite the satisfaction of them with as impatient a vehemence, as *Rachel* did for children, Gen. 30. 1. *give me them or I die*: no wonder that we are alwaies complaining of disappointments, since in these the very success is a defeat, and is but the exchanging the pain of a craving ravenous stomach, for that of a clo'd and nauseated. Indeed men of this temper condemn themselves to a perpetual restlessness, they are like phantastic mutineers, who when their superiors send them blanks to write their own conditions, know not what will please them: and even Omnipotence it self cannot satisfy these till it have new moulded them, and reduced their desires to a certainty.

16. BUT

16. B U T in the mean time how unjustly do they accuse God of illiberality, because every thing answers not their humor? He has made them reasonable creatures, and has provided them satisfactions proportionable to their nature; but if they will have wild irrational expectations, neither his wisdom, nor his goodness is concern'd to satisfy those. His supplies are real and solid, and therefore have no correspondence to imaginary wants. If we will create such to our selves, why do we not create an imaginary satisfaction to them? 'Twere the merrier frenzy of the two, to be like the mad *Atbe-man* that thought all the ships that came into the harbor his own: and 'twere better *Ixion* like to have our Arms fill'd with a cloud, then to have them perpetually beating our own breasts, and be still tormenting our selves with unsatisfiable desires. Yet this is the state to which men voluntarily subject themselves, and then quarrel at God because they will not let themselves be happy. But sure their very complaints justify God, and argue that he has dealt very kindly with them, and afforded them all the necessary accommodations of life: for did they want them, they

SECT. IV. *Enjoiments above Sufferings.* 81

they would not be so sensible of the want of the other. He that is at perfect ease may feel with some vexation the biting of a flea or gnat, which would not be at all observable if he were upon the rack. And should God change the scene, and make these nice people feel the destitution of necessaries; all these regrets about superfluities would be over-whelmed. In the mean time how deplorable a thing is it, that we are still the poorer for Gods bounty, that those to whom he has opened his hand widest, should open their mouth so too, in out-cries and murmurs? For I think I may say that generally, those that are the farthest remov'd from want, are so from content too; they take no notice of all the real substantial blessings they enjoy, leave these (like the ninety nine sheep in the wilderness) forgotten and neglected; to go in quest after some fugitive satisfaction, which like a shadow flies still faster in proportion to their pursuit.

17. AND now would God they could be recalled from this unprofitable chace, and instead of the Horsecleeches note, *Give, give*, Prov. 30. 15. take up that of the Psalmist, *what shall I render to the Lord*  
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*for all the benefits he hath don unto me ?* Psa. 116. 12. Let them count how many valuable or rather inestimable things, they have received from his mercy, and then confront them with those corrections they have found from his justice; and if they do this impartially, I doubt not they will find wherewithall to check their highest mutinies; and will join with me in confessing, that their good things abundantly out-weigh their ill.

18. IF now we carry on the comparison to the last circumstance, and consider the constancy, we shall find as wide a difference. Let us take the Psalmists testimony, and there will appear a very distant date of his mercies and punishments. *His mercies endure for ever*, Psa. 146. whereas his wrath *endures but the twinkling of an eye*, Psa. 30. 5. And accordingly God owns his acts of severity as his *strange work*, Isa. 28. 21. that which he resorts to only upon special emergencies; but his mercies *are renewed every morning*, Lam. 3. 25. and doubtless we may all upon trial affirm the same. There are many of the most necessary comforts of life which do not only sometimes visit us as guests, but dwell with us as inmates and domestics. How many

many are there who have lived in a perpetual affluence from their cradles to their graves, have never known what it is to want? And tho the goods of fortune are perhaps less constant to some, yet the refreshments of nature are usually so to us all. We eat and drink, we sleep, we recreate, we converse in a continued circle, and go our round almost as constantly as the sun do's his. Or if God do's sometimes a little interrupt us in it, put some short restraint upon our refreshments, yet that comparatively to the time we enjoy them, is but proportionable to the stop he has sometimes made of the Sun, Jos. 10. 13. 2 Kings 20. 8. or of the sea, Exod. 14. 21. which as they were no subversions of the course of nature, so neither are those short pauses he sometimes makes, a repeal of those fixt and customary benefits his providence usually allots us. But who is there can say that any one of his afflictions has bin of equal continuance, or has prest him with so few intermissions? Perhaps he may have mist some few nights sleep: but what is that to a twelve-months, or perhaps a whole lives enjoying it? 'Tis possible his stomach and his meat have not alwaies bin ready to-

gether; but how much oftner have they met to his delight? and generally those things that are most useful, are but rarely interrupted. Nay to a great many even the delicacies of life are no less constant, and their luxuries are as quotidian as their bread: whereas unless their vices or their fancies create uneasinesses to them, those that come immediately from Gods hand, make long intermissions and short staies. Yet for all this they that should measure by the uncessantness of mens complaints, would judge that the scene was quite reversed, and that our good things are as *Job speaks, swifter then a weavers shuttle*, Job. 7. 6. whilst our ill, like *Gehazies Leprosy, cleave inseparably to us*, 2 King. 5. 10.

19. THE truth is we will not let our selves enjoy those intervals God allowes us, but when a calamity do's retire we will still keep it in fiction and imagination; revolve it in our minds, and because it is possible it may return, look upon it as not gon. Like Aguish patients we count our selves sick on our well-day, because we expect a fit the next. A strange stupid folly thus to court vexation, and be miserable in Chimera. Do's any man  
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or indeed any beast desire to keep a distastful relish still in his mouth; to chew the cud upon gall and wormwood? yet certainly there are a multitude of people whose lives are imbitter'd to them merely by these fantastic imaginary sufferings. Nor do we only fright our selves with images and Ideas of past calamities, but we dress up new bugbears and mormoes, are Poetic and aerial in our inventions, and lay Romantic scenes of distresses. This is a thing very incident to jealous natures, who are alwaies raising alarms to themselves. A suspicious man looks on every body with dread. One man he fears has designs upon his fortune, another on his reputation, perhaps a third upon his life: whilst in the mean time, the only ill design against him is managed by himself; his own causeless fears and jealousies which put him in a state of hostility with all the world; and do often betray him to the very things he groundlessly suspected. For it is not seldom seen that men have incurr'd real mischiefs by a fond solicitude of avoiding imaginary ones. I do not question but this is a state calamitous enough, and shall acknowledg it very  
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likely that such persons shall have little or no truce from their troubles, who have such an exhausted spring within themselves; yet we may say to them as the Prophet did to the house of *Jacob*, *Is the spirit of the Lord straitned? are these his doings?* Mich. 2. 7. Such men must not cry out that Gods hand lies heavy upon them, but their own; and so can be no impeachment to the truth of our observation, that Gods blessings are of a longer duration, keep a more fixt steddly course then his punishments. The result of all is, that the generality of mankind have good things (even as to temporals) which do in the three respects fore-mention'd exceed the ill. I mean the true and real ills which God sends, tho not those fanciful ones they raise to themselves.

20. AND now why should it not appear a reasonable proposition that men should entertain themselves with the pleasanter parts of Gods dispensations to them, and not alwaies pore upon the harsher: especially since the former are so much a fairer object and perpetually in their eie, why should we look on the  
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the more sadning spectacles of human frailty or misfortune, thro all the magnifying optics our fancies can supply, and perversly turn away our eyes from the chearfuller? Yet this God knows is too much the case with most of us. How nicely and critically do we observe every little adverse accident of our lives? what tragical stories of them do our memories present us with? When alas a whole current of prosperity glides by without our notice. Like little children our fingers are never off the fore place, till we have pickt every light scratch into an Ulcer. Nay like the leuder sort of beggers, we make artificial sores to give us a pretence of complaint. And can we then expect God should concern himself in the cure? Indeed in the course of his ordinary providence there is no cure for such people, unless it be by revulsion, the making them feel the smart of some very great and pressing affliction. They therefore put themselves under an unhappy dilemma, either to continue their own tormentors, or to endure the severest course of Gods discipline. 'Tis true the last is the more  
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eligible, but I am sure the best way is to prevent both, by a just and grateful sense of Gods mercies, which will be yet farther illustrated if we compare them with our own demerits.

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SECT. V.

*Of our Demerit towards God.*

I. IT is the common fault of our nature, that we are very apt to be partial to ourselves, and to square our expectations more by what we wish, than by what we deserve. Something of this is visible in our dealings with men. We oft look to reap where we have not sowed, Mat. 25. 25. expect benefits where we do none: yet in civil transactions there are still remaining such footsteps of natural justice, that we are not universally so unreasonable: all traffic and commerce subsisting upon the principle of equal retribution, giving one good thing for another equivalent; so that no man expects to buy corn with chaff, or Gold with dross. But in our dealings with God, we put off even this common equity; are vast in our expectations, but penurious and base in our returns; and as if God were our steward not our Lord, we require of him with a confidence proper only to those who ask their

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own: whilst in the interim, what we offer to him is with such a disdainful slightness, as if we meant it rather an alms than an homage.

2. GOD indeed is so munificent, that he *prevents us with his blessings*, Psal. 21. 3, gives us many things before we ask: had he not don so we could not have bin so much as in a capacity of asking. But tho the first & fundamental mercies are absolute and free, yet the subsequent are conditional: and accordingly we find in scripture, that God makes no promise either concerning this life or a better, but on condition of Obedience. The Jews who had much larger propofals of temporal happiness then Christians have, yet never had them upon other terms. God expressly articulated for the performance of his commands, and made all their enjoiments forfeitable upon the failure, as we may see at large in the book of Deuteronomy. And under the Gospel, St. Paul appropriates the *promises as well of this life as of that to come unto godliness*, 1. Tim. 4. 8. It will therefore be a material inquiry for every man, whether he have kept his title entire and have not by breach of the condition forfeited his clame, even to the most common

SECT. V. *Of our Demerit towards God.* 91

mon ordinary blessings; for if he have, common reason will tell him he can challenge none: and that the utmost he can hope for, must be only upon a new score of unmerited favor.

3. And here certainly *every mouth must be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God*, Rom. 3. 19. For alas who is there that can say his obedience has bin in any degree proportionable to his obligation? 'Tis manifest we have all received abundantly from Gods hand, but what has he had from ours? I may challenge the best man, to cast up the account of his best day, and tell me whether his receipts have not infinitely exceeded his disbursements: whether for any one good thing he has don, he has not received many. Nor is the disparity only in number, but much more in value. Gods works are perfect, all he do's for us like the first 6 daies productions, *are all very good*, Gen. 1. but alas our very *righteousness is as filth by rags*, Esa. 64. 6. We offer him *the blind and the lame*, Mal. 1. 9. a few yawning drowsy prayers perhaps, wherein he has the least share: the fuller current of our thoughts running towards our secular or sinful concerns. We drop it, may be a scanty Alms,

wherein 'tis odds our vain-glory scrambles for a share with him, if it do not wholly ingross it. We sit an hour at a sermon, but 'tis rather to hear the wit or eloquence of the preacher, then the word of God. Like the duller sort of animals, we like well to have our itching ears scratcht, but grow sturdy and restive when we should do what we are there taught. In a word all our services at the best are miserable maim'd and imperfect; and too often corrupt and unsound. So that God may well upbraid us as he did *Israel*, *Offer it now to thy governor, will he be pleas'd with it?* Mal. 1. 1. These very iniquities of our holy things, are enough to defeat all our pretences to any good from Gods hand. Yet God knows this is much the best side of us: 'tis not every one that can make so fair an appearance as this amounts to. With many, there is no place to complain of the blemishes of their sacrifices, for they offer none; of whom we may say in the words of the Psalmist, *God is not in all their thoughts*, Psal. 10. 4. I fear there want not those who drive away the day, the week, nay the year, without remembering in whose *hand their time is*, Psal. 31. 18. or paying him any solemn tribute of  
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of it; who enjoy the services of all inferior creatures, without considering that theirs are more due to the supreme Lord: in a word, who live as if they were absolutely independent; had their existence purely from themselves, and had no Creator to whom they owed their being, or any consequent duty. And sure men who thus discard themselves from Gods family, have very little reason to expect the provisions of it: yet even such as these have the impudence to complain, if any thing be wanting to their needs (shall I say) or to their lusts; can ravingly profane Gods name in their impatiencies, which they know not how to use in their prayers: as if the Deity were considerable in no other notion, then that of their carter or steward.

4. IF now we seriously reflect, what can be more admirable then that infinite patience of God; who notwithstanding the miserable infirmities of the pious, and the leud contempt of the impious, still goes on resolutely in his bounty, and continues to all mankind some, and to some all his temporal blessings? He has no obligation of justice to do so, for it is no part of his compact; he has none of gratitude,

titude, for he is perpetually affronted and disoblighd. Surely we may well say with *David*, *Is this after the manner of men*, *O Lord?* 1 Chro. 17. 17. Can the highest human indulgence bear any proportion with this divine Clemency? no certainly, no finite patience but would be exhausted with the thousandth part of our provocations.

5. B U T is not our dealing too as little after the manner of men; I mean of reasonable creatures? For us who have forfeited our right to all, and yet by mere favor are still kept in the possession of many great blessings: for us to grow mutinous, because there is perhaps something more trifling which is deny'd us, is such a stupid ingratitude, as one would think impossible to human nature. Should a Tenant with us have at once forfeited his lease, and maliciously affronted his Landlord, he would sure think himself very gently dealt with, if he were suffer'd to enjoy but a part of his first estate; but we should think him not only insolent, but mad, who when the whole were left him, should quarrel & clamor if he might not have his Cottage adorn'd with marble floors, and guilded roofs. Yet at this wild  
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rate we behave our selves to our great Landlord, grow pettish and angry if we have not every thing we can fancy, tho we enjoy many more useful, merely by his indulgence. And can there be any thing imagin'd more unreasonable? Let us therefore if not for piety, yet at least to justify our clame to rationality, be more ingenuous; let us not consult only with our fond appetites, and be thus perpetually solliciting this satisfaction; but rather reflect on what tenure we hold what we already have, even that of superabundant mercy; and fear, least like insolent beggars by the impudence of our demands we divert even that charity which was design'd us. In short let every man when he computes what he wants of his desires, reckon as exactly how much he is short of his duty; and when he has duly ponder'd both, he will think it a very gentle composition to have the one unsupplied, so he may have the other remitted; and will see cause contentedly to sit down and say with honest *Mephibosheth*, *What right have I to cry any more unto the King?* Sam. 19. 28. But if it be thus with us upon the mere score of our imperfections or omissions, what an obnoxious state do  
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our innumerable actual sins put us in? If the spots of our sacrifices are provoking, what are our sacrileges and bold profanations? If those who neglect or forget God are listed among his enemies, what are those who avowedly defy him? Indeed he that soberly considers the world, and sees how daringly the divine Majesty is daily affronted, cannot but wonder that the perversions of our manners, those prodiges in morality, should not be answer'd with as great prodiges in calamity too; that we should ever have other ruin than that of *Sodom*, or the earth serve us for any other purpose then to be, as it was to *Korah*, Num. 16. our living sepulcher.

6. NOR is this longanimity of God observable only towards the mass and collective body of mankind, but to every man in particular. Who is there that if he ransack his conscience, shall not find guilts enow to justify God in the utmost severities towards him? so that how much soever his punishments are short of that, so much he evidently owes to the lenity and compassion of God. And who is there that suffers in this world the utmost that God can inflict? We have a great many suffering capacities, and if those  
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were all fill'd up to the height, our condition would scarce differ from that of the damned in any thing but duration. But God is more merciful, and never inflicts at that rate on us here. Every mans experience can tell him, that God discharges not his whole quiver at once upon him, but exerts him in many more particulars: then he afflicts him; & yet the same experience will probably tell most of us, that we are not so modest in our assaults upon God; we attacke him in all his concerns (as far as our feeble malice can reach) in his Sovereignty, in his honor, in his relatives, nay sometimes in his very essence and being. And as they are universal in respect of him, so also in regard of our selves: we engage all our powers in this war, do not only *yield* (as the Apostle speaks) *our members instruments of unrighteousness*; Rom. 6. 18. but we press them upon the service of sensual and vilo lusts, even beyond our native propensions. Nor are only the members of our body, but the faculties of our souls also thus employed; our understandings are busied first in contriving sins; and then excuses and disguises for them; our wills are yet more sturdy rebels; and when the understand-

ing is beat out of all its out-works, yet suddenly keep their hold in spite of all conviction; and our affections madly rush *on like the horse into the battel*, Jer. 8. 6. deterred by nothing of danger, so there be but sin enough in the attempt.

7. AND now with what face can people that thus pursue an hostility, expect that it should not be returned to them? do's any man denounce war, and yet expect from his adversary all the caresses, the obligements of friendship? self-defence will prompt even the meekest nature to despoile his enemy at least of those things which he uses to his annoiance; and if God should give way even to that lowest degree of anger, where or what were we? for since we employ our whole selves against him, nothing but destruction can avert our injuries. But tis happy for us we have to do with one who cannot fear us, who knows the impotence of our wild attempts, and so allai's his resentment of our insolence, with his pity of our follies. Were it not for this, we should not be left in a possibility so oft to iterate our provocations; every wicked imagination and black design, would be at once defeated and punished by infatuation

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on and frenzy: every blasphemous Atheistical speech would wither the tongue, like that arm of *Jeroboam* which he stretcht against the Prophet, 2 King. 13. 4. and every impious act would like the prohibited retrospect of *Lots Wife*, fix us perpetual monuments of divine vengeance.

8. AND then how much do we owe to the mercy and commiseration of our God, that *he suffers not his whole displeasure to arise*, Psa. 78. 39. that he abates any thing of that just severity he might use toward us? He that is condemned to the Gallows, would think it a mercy to scape with any inferior penalty: why have we then such mean thoughts of Gods Clemency, when he descends to such low compositions with us? corrects us so lightly as if 'twere only matter of ceremony & punctilio, the regard of his honor, rather than the execution of his wrath. For alas let him among us that is the most innocent, & undeservedly afflicted, muster up his sins and sufferings, and he will see a vast inequality: and (had he not other grounds of assurance) would be almost tempted to think those were not the provoking cause, they are so unproportionably answered. He sins in innumerable instances, and is

punisht in few; he sins habitually and perpetually, and suffers rarely and seldom; nay perhaps he has somtimes sinn'd with greediness, and yet God has punisht with regret and reluctance. *How shalt I give thee up, O Ephraim?* Hof. 11. 8. And when all the disparities are consider'd, we must certainly join heartily in *Ezras* confession, *Thou O God has punisht us less then our iniquities deserve*, Ezra. 9. 13.

9. NAY besides all our antecedent, we have after guilts no less provoking. I mean our ungracious repinings at the light chastisements of our former sins, our out-cries upon every little uneasiness, which may justly cause God to turn our whips into scorpions; and according as he threatned *Israel*, Lev. 26. 18. *to punish us yet seven times more*. And yet even this do's not immediately exasperate him. The Jews were an instance how long he could bear with a murmuring generation; but certainly we of this nation are a greater: *yet let us not be high minded but fear*, Rom. 11. 20. for we see at last the doom fell heavy tho it was protracted: a succession of miraculous judgments pursued those murmurers, so that not one of them enter'd Canaan. And its very ob-

observable, that whereas to other sins Gods denunciations are in scripture conditional and reverſible; this was abſolute and bound with an oath, *He ſware in his wrath that they ſhould not enter into his reſt*, Pſal. 95. 11. And yet if we compare the hardſhips of the Iſraelites in the wilderneſs with moſt of our ſufferings, we ſhall be forced to confeſs our mutinies have leſs temptation, and conſequently leſs excuſe; from whence 'tis very reaſonable to infer, as the greatneſs of our danger if we perſiſt, ſo the greatneſs of Gods long ſuffering towards us, who yet allows us ſpace to reform: and ſure new complaints ſound very ill from us, who are liable to ſo ſevere an account for our old ones. I fear the moſt reſign'd perſons of us will upon recollection find, they have upon one occaſion or other out-vied the number of the Iſraelites murmurs, therefore unleſs we will emulate them in their plagues, let us fear to add one more leſt that make up the fatal ſum, and render our deſtruction irrevocable.

10. UPON all theſe conſiderations it appears how little reaſon any of us have to repine at our heavielt|preſſures. But there is yet a farther circumſtance to be adverted

adverted to, and is too applicable to many of us, that is, that our sins are not only the constant meritorious cause of our sufferings, but they are also very often the instrumental cause also; and produce them not only by way of retaliation from God, but by a natural efficacy. *Solomon* tells us he that loves pleasure, shall be a poor man, and that a whorish woman will bring a man to a piece of bread, Prov. 9. 26. that he that sits long at the wine shall have needness of eyes, Chap. 23. 29. 30. that the slothful soul shall suffer hunger, 19. 15. and all these not by immediate supernatural infliction from God, but as the proper genuine effects of those respective vices. Indeed God in his original establishment of things, has made so close a connexion between sin and punishment, that he is not often put to exert his power in any extraordinary way, but may trust us to be our own Lictors, our own backslidings reprove us, Jer. 2. 19. and our iniquities are of themselves enough to become our ruine, Exod. 18. 38.

II. It may therefore be a seasonable question for every man to put to himself, whether the troubles he labors under be not of this sort; whether the poverty he  
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complains of, be not the effect of, his riot and profusion, his sloth and negligence? whether when he cries out that *his comeliness is turn'd into corruption*, Dan. 10. 8. he may not answer himself, that they are his visits to the harlots house which have thus made *rottenness enter into his bones*, Hab. 3. 16. whether when he is beset with contentions, and has wounds without cause, *he have not tarried long at the wine*; when he has lost his friend, whether he have not by some *trecherous wound*, Eccl. 22. 22. forced him to depart: or when he lies under infamy, whether it be not only the Echo of his own scandalous crimes. If he find it thus with him, certainly his mouth is stoppt, and he cannot without the most dissingenuous impudence complain of any but himself. He could not be ignorant that such effects did naturally attend such causes, and therefore if he would take the one, he must take the other also. No man sure can be so mad, as to think God should work miracles (disunite those things which nature hath conjoin'd) only that he may sin at ease, have all the bestial pleasures he can project, and none of the consequent smart. We read indeed God divided the sea, but  
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it was to make *the way for the Ransomed of the Lord to pass over*, Isa. 51. 10. those who were his own people, and went in at his command; but when they were secured, we find the waters immediately return'd to their chanel, and overwhelmed the Egyptians, who ventured without the same warrant. And sure the case is alike here, when any man can produce Gods mandate for him to run into all excess of riot, to defecate the temple of the holy Ghost, and make his body member of an harlot, 1 Cor. 6. 15. In a word when God bids him do any of those things, which God and good men abhor, then and not before he may hope he may sever such acts from their native penal effects; for till then (how profuse soever some Legendary stories represent him) he will certainly never so bestow his miracles.

12. But I fear upon scrutiny there will appear a yet farther circumstance upon which to arraign our mutinies; for tho it be unreasonable enough to charge God with the ill effect of our own leudness, yet 'tis a higher step to murmur because we have not materials to be wicked enough. And this I fear is the case with too many of us, who tho they are not  
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so dispoil'd by their sins, but that they can keep up their round of vicious pleasures, yet are discontented because they think som others have them more exquisite, think their vices are not Gentile enough, unless they be very expensive, and are covetous only that they may be more luxurious. These are such as St. James speaks of, *who ask amiss, that they may consume it upon their lusts*, Jam: 4. 3. and sure to be mutinous on this account is one of the highest pieces of frenzy. Would any man in his wits tell another he will cut his throat, and then expect he should furnish him with a knife for it? And yet to this amount our murmurs against God; for his not giving us those things wherewith we only design to wage war with him. For surely if the discontents of mankind were closely inspected, I doubt a great many would be found of this kind. It concerns the Reader therefore to make the inquisition in his own breast, both in this and all the former particulars, and I doubt not, if he do it with any ingenuity and uprightness, he will be abundantly convinced that for his few mites of obedience he paies to God, he receives talents of mercies (even temporal)

ral) from him: and that on the other side, that God as much underpaies his sins, as he overpaies his services: by which God do's sufficiently attest how little he delights in our affliction, how gladly he takes any light occasion of caressing and cherishing, and overskips those of punishing us. Which sure ought to make us convert all our displeasures against our sins, which extort those acts of severity from him, to which his nature is most averse. And here indeed our resentments cannot be too sharp, put towards God our fittest address will be in the penitential form of the Prophet Daniel, *O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, but to the Lord our God belong mercies and forgiveness, who we have rebelled against him*, Dan. 9. 8, 9. And as his justice is to be revered in his inflictions, so is his wisdom also, in so disposing of events to particular persons, as may best consist with the universal Oeconomy and managery of the world, the consideration whereof is the design of the next Section.

SECT. VI.

*Of Gods general Providence.*

1. **W**HEN God made the universe, he intended not only to glorify himself in one transient act of his power, and then leave this great and wonderful production of his, as the *Ostrich* her eggs in the wilderness, Lam. 4. 3. but having drawn it out of its first Chaos, he secur'd it from returning thither again, by establishing as a due symmetry of parts, so also a regular order of motion: hence it is that the heavens have their constant revolutions, the earth its succession of determinate seasons, animals their alternate course of generation and corruption, and by this wise Oeconomy, the world after so many thousand years, seems still in its spring and first beauty. But it had bin in vain to have thus secured the duration of the creatures, if man for whose sake they were made had bin excluded from this care. His faculty of reason would

have made him but the more fatal instrument of confusion, and taught him the more compendious waies of disturbing the world. *Job* compares him to *the wild asses colt*, *Job* 11. 12. which takes its range without diverting to any thing of the common good. God has therefore doubly hedged in this unruly creature, made a fence of laws about him (both natural and positive) and besides has taken him into the common circle of his providence, so that he, as well as the rest of the creation, has his particular station assign'd him; and that not only in reference to other creatures, but himself; has put a difference between one man and another, ordained several ranks and Classes of men, and endowed them with special and appropriate qualifications for those stations wherein he has set them.

2. THIS, as it is a work of infinit wisdom in God, so it is of unspeakable advantage to men. Without this regular disposurè, the world would have bin in the same confusion which we read of in the host of the Midianites, *every mans sword against his fellow*, *Jud.* 7. 22. Nothing but force could determine who should do, or enjoy any thing; and even that decision  
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also would have bin repellable by a greater force : so that we have all reason to confess the utility of that order God has set among men : and even he that bears the lowest and most despicable place in it, is certainly infinitely more happy by contributing to that general Harmony, then he could be in any state of discord.

3. WERE this now well consider'd, methinks it should silence all our complaints, and men should not be so vehemently concern'd in what part of the structure it pleases the great Architect to put them : for every man is to look on himself only as a small parcel of those materials which God is to put into form. Every stone is not fit for the corner, not every little rafter for the main beam : the wisdom of the Master builder is alone to determin that. And sure there cannot be a more vile content of the divine wisdom then to dispute his choice. Had God wisdom enough to contrive this vast and beautiful fabric, and may he not be trusted with one of us poor worms ? Did he by his *wisdom make the heavens, and by his understanding stretch out the clouds*, Pro. 3. 19. and shall he not know where to place a little lump of figur'd earth ? this is certainly

tainty the most absurd distrust imaginable, and yet this is really the true meaning of our repining at the condition he has placed us in.

4. THE truth is, we are so full of our selves, that we can see nothing beyond it: every man expects God should place him where he has a mind to be, tho by it he discompose the whole scheme of his providence. But tho we are so senselessly partial yet God is not so: he that comprehends at once that whole concern of mankind, applies himself to the accommodating those, not the humoring any particular person. *He has made the great and the small, and careth for all alike*, Wils. 6. 7. He is the common Father of mankind, and disposes things for the public advantage of this great family, and tis not all the impatient cravings of a froward child that shall make him recede from his designed method. We are apt enough, I am sure, to tax it not only as a weakness, but injustice too in a Prince, when he indulges any thing to a private favorite to the public disadvantage; yet so unequal are we, that we murmur at God for not doing that, which we murmur at men for doing.

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5. BESIDES a man is to consider, that other men have the same appetites with himself. If he dislike an inferior state, why should he not think others do so too? and then as the wise man speaks, *whose voice shall the Lord hear?* Eccclus. 34. 24. 'Tis sure great insolence in me to expect that God should be more concern'd to humor me, then those multitudes of others who have the same desires. And the more impatient my longings are, the less in reason should be my hopes; for mutiny is no such endearing quality as to render any man a darling to God. But if all men should have equal satisfactions, we should puzzle even Omnipotence it self. Every man would be above and superior, yet those are comparative terms, and if no man were below, no man could be above. So in wealth, most men desire more, but every man do's at least desire to keep what he has; how then shall one part of the world be supplied without the diminution of the other, unless there should be as miraculous a multiplication of treasure for mans avarice, as there was of Loaves for their hunger, Mat. 16. 9. It was a good answer which the Ambassadors of an oppressed Province made to *Antony*, if O  
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Emperor, thou wilt have double taxes from us, thou must help us to double Springs and Harvests. And sure God must be at the expence of a new Creation, make us a double world, if he should oblige himself to satisfy all the unreasonable appetites of men: and if he satisfy not all, why should any particular person look that his alone should be indulged to?

6. YET as unreasonable as it is, the most of us do betray such a persuasion. No man is discontented that there are lower, as well as higher degrees in the world, that there are poor as well as rich, but all sensible men assent to the fitness of it: yet if themselves happen to be set in the lower form, they exclaim as if the whole order of the world were subverted; which is a palpable indication that they think that Providence which governs others should serve them, and distribute to them not what it, but themselves think good. This immoderate self-love is the spring and root of most of our complaints, makes us such unequal judges in our own concerns, and prompts us to put in Caveats and exceptions on our own behalf, as *David* did on his sons, *See that thou hurt not the young man Absalom?* 2 Sam. 18. 15.

as if God were to manage the government of the World with a particular regard to our liking, and were like the Angels at *Sodom*, Gen. 19. 22. *to do nothing till we had got into Zoar*, had all our demands secured to us.

7. IT would indeed astonish a considering man to see, that altho the concerns of men are all disposed by an unerring Wisdom, and acknowledged by themselves to be so, yet that scarce any man is pleased. The truth is, we have generally in us the worser part of the Levelers principle, and tho we can very contentedly behold multitudes below us, yet are impatient to see any above us; not only the *foot* (to use the Apostles simile) *complains that it is not the hand, but the ear because it is not the eye*, 1 Cor. 12. 15, 16. Not only the lowermost, but the higher ranks of men are uneasie, if there be any one step above them. Nay so importunate is this aspiring humor, that we see men are forced to feed it, tho but with air and shadows. He that cannot make any real advance in his quality, will yet do it in Effigies, in all little gaieties and pageantries of it. Every degree in these respects not only emulates, but imitates

its superior, till at last by that impatience of their proper distance they make it greater, & sink even below their first state by their ridiculous profusion. Indeed the World seems to be so over-run with this vanity, that there is little visible distinction of the degrees, and one had need go do the Herald office to know mens qualities, for neither their habit nor equipage do now adaies inform us with any certainty.

8. BUT by all this it appears that men look on themselves only as single persons, without reference to the community whereof they are members. For did they consider that, they would endeavor rather to become the places wherein they were set, by doing the duties belonging to them, then be perpetually projecting for a change. A tree that is every year transplanted will never bear fruit, and a mind that is alwaies hurried from its proper station, will scarce ever do good in any. This is excellently exprest to us by Solomon, *As a bird that wandereth from his nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place*, Prov. 27. 8. 'Tis easy to divine the fate of those young ones from whom the dam wanders, and 'tis as easie to guess how the duties of that place will be performed,

formed, whose owner is alwaies upon the wing, and making towards another. I wish we had not too costly experiments both in Church and State of the truth of this observation. Alas, we forget that we are all servants to the same Master, and that he is to appoint in what office we shall serve him. How should we like it in any of our own Families, to have an inferior officer leave his work undon, because he has more mind to be Major-domo? Yet this insolence we every day repete towards God; fullenly dispute his order, and unless we may chuse our own employments, will do nothing.

9. 'Tis evident, this perverse temper of mankind breeds a great deal of mischief and disturbance in the World, but would breed arrant confusion and subversion, if it were suffered to have its full range. If God permit but one ambitious spirit to break loose in an Age, as the instrument of his wrath, what destruction does it often times make? How does it *cause the whole earth to tremble, and shake Kingdoms*, as is said of *Nebuchadnezzar*, Isa. 14. 16. and may be said of many others of those whole-sale Robbers who have dignified the trade? But if every aspiring

ing humor should be as prosperous, where would it find fuel to maintain the flame? No doubt every Age produces men of as unbounded desires as *Alexander* or *Cesar*, but God gives them not the same opportunities to trouble the world. And accordingly in the more petty ambitions of private men he often orders it so, that those soaring minds can find no benign gale to help their mounting. He that sets bounds to the Sea, saying, *hitherto shalt thou come and no farther, and tho the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail, tho they roar, yet can they not pass over*, Jer. 5. 22. does also depress the swelling pride of men, hangs clogs and weights upon them that they cannot rise to their affected height. For tho we are all willing to forget it, yet God remembers that he is the Rector of the Universe, and will assert his Dominion. The subtilest contrivance cannot circumvent him, the most daring pretender cannot wrest any thing out of his hand, the *Lord will still be King, be the people never so impatient*, Psalm 99. 1. 'Twill therefore sure be as well our prudence as our duty, to *be still, and know that he is God*, Psalm 46. 10. with an humble dereliction of our own wills acquiesce in his,

his, and not by ineffective strugglings provoke, whom we are sure never to subdue. We may, like unmanag'd Horses, some and fret, but still God has the bridle in our jaws, and we cannot advance a step farther then he permits us. Why should we then create torment to our selves by our repinings, which only sets us farther from our aims. 'Tis Gods declared method to exalt the lowly, and 'tis observable in the first two Kings of *Israel*, who were of Gods immediate election, that he surprized them with that Dignity, when they were about mean and humble employments, the one searching his Fathers Asses, the other keeping his Fathers sheep: and would men honestly and diligently exercise themselves in the business of their proper calling, they might perhaps find it a more direct road to advancement; then all the sinister Arts by which ambitious men endeavor to climb. *Solomon* sets it down as an Aphorism, *See'st thou a man diligent in his business, he shall stand before Kings, he shall not stand before mean men*, Pro. 22. 29. But whether it happen to have that effect or no, it will have a better, for it will sweeten his present condition, divert his mind from mutinous reflections  
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on other mens height, and his own lowness; for 'tis commonly men who mind not their work that are at so much leasure to gaze. He that carefully plies his own business, will have his thoughts more centred: and doubtless 'tis no small happiness to have them so; for 'tis their gadding too much abroad, looking on other mens conditions that sends them back (like *Dinah* deflowred) to put all in uproar at home. The son of *Syrach* speaks with transportation of the state even of him that labors and is content, and calls it a *sweet life*, Ecclus. 40. 18. And certainly 'tis infinitely more so then that of the greatest Prince whose mind swells beyond his territories.

10. UPON all these considerations it cannot but appear very reasonable that we should leave God to govern the world, not be putting in like the sons of *Zebedee*, for the highest seats, but continually rest our selves where he has placed us; till his Providence (not our own designs) advance us. We can no where be so obscure as to be hid from his eies, who as he valued the Widows mite above the great oblations of the Rich; so he will no less graciously accept the humble endeavors  
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of the mean, then the more eminent services of the Mighty; Himself having declared, That he accepts, *according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not*, 2 Cor. 18, 12. So that in what rank soever a man is set, he has still the opportunity of approving himself to God, and tho in the eie of the World he be a vessel of dishonor, yet in the day when God comes to *make up his Jewels*, Mal. 5. 17. there will be another estimate made of him who regularly moves in his own sphere. And sure he that sits down in this acquiescence is a happier man, than he that enjoies the greatest worldly splendor: but infinitely more so than he who impatiently covets but cannot attain them; for such a man puts himself upon a perpetual rack, keeps his appetites up at the utmost stretch; and yet has nothing wherewith to satisfy them. Let therefore our ease, if not our duty prompt us to acquiescence, and a ready submission to Gods disposals, to which we have yet a farther inducement from that distinct care he hath over every mans peculiar, by which he proportions to him, what is really best for him; of which we are farther to consider in the next Section.

## SECT. VII.

*Of Gods particular Providence.*

I. **I**T is the imperfection of our finite nature, that we cannot at once attend to divers things, but the more vehement our intention is upon one, the greater is our neglect of the rest. But Gods Infinity cannot be so bounded; his Eies at once see, and his Providence at once orders all the most distant and disparate things in the World. He is not such an Epicurean Deity, as to sequester himself wholly to the enjoiment of his own felicity, and to despise the concerns of poor mortals; but tho he have his *dwelling so high, yet he humbleth himself to behold the things in heaven and earth*, Psal. 113. 5. Nor does his Providence confine it self to the more splendid and greater parts of managery, the conduct of Empires and States, but it descends to the lowest parts of his Creation, to the *Fowls* of the air, to the *Lilies* of the field, and then

then sure our Saviors inference as to mankind is irrefragable, *Are ye not much better then they?* Mat. 6. 26. If a Sparrow (as he elsewhere tells his Disciples) cannot fall to the ground without Gods particular notice; surely no human creature is less considerable to him; nay if our very hairens are numbred, we cannot think the excrescence is of more value then the flock, but must conclude that God with a particular advertence watches over the concerns of every man.

2. Now God being infinitely good, cannot thus attend us upon any insidious design of doing us mischief; he watches over us as a guardian, not as a spy: and directs his observation to the more seasonable adapting his benefits. And as he is thus gracious in designing our advantage; so he is no less wise in contriving it. All things saies the *wise man are not profitable for all men*, Eccclus. 37. 28. Indeed nothing is absolutely good but God: all created things are good or ill in reference to that to which they are applied. Meat is good, but to a surfeited stomach 'tis not only nauseous but dangerous. Fire is good, but if put in our bosoms, not only burns our cloths but flesh. And as hu-

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man wisdom directs the right application of these and the like, so the supreme and divine orders events according to the disposition of the person concern'd; *he knows our frame*; Psal. 103. 14. and discerns what operation such or such things will have upon us, while we who know neither our selves nor them, can make but random guesses, and worse choices. And sure he that do's but thus in the general acknowledged Gods providence, goodness and wisdom (which he is no Christian who do's not) has a sufficient amulet against all his sollicitudes, much more his repinings. He cannot think he suffers unawares to him who sees all things. He cannot think his sufferings are design'd for ill to him, because they are dispos'd by him who intends and projects his good. Nor can he fear those intentions can miscarry, which are guided by an infinit and unerring wisdom, and backt by an uncontrollable power. And sure this is as the Apostle speaks, Heb. 6. 18. *strong consolation*, if we would but duely apply it.

3. YET because general notions do often make but light impressions on us, it may not be amiss to make a little more inspection, and to observe how ap-  
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plicable they are to the several kinds of our discontents. Now those may be reduced to two: for either we are troubled at the want of something we desire, or at the suffering of something we would avert; so that the two notions of privative and positive, divide between them all our affliction.

4. THE first of these is usually the most comprehensive, for there are few who have not more torment from the apprehension of somewhat they want, then from the smart of any thing they feel. And indeed whilst our desires are so vagrant and exorbitant, they will be sure to furnish matter enough for our discontents. But certainly there is not in the world such a charm for them, as the consideration that God is more wise to discern, and more careful to provide what is really good for us than we our selves. We poor purblind creatures look only on the surface of things, and if we see a beautiful appearance, somewhat that invites our senses, we court it with the utmost earnestness; but God penetrates deeper, he sees to the bottom both of us and those things we desire, and finds often that tho they may please our appetite, they will hurt our health;

health; and will no more give them to us, then a careful father will to his child those gilded poisons he cries for. Perhaps this man is taken with the enchanting music of fame, likes not his own obscure station, but would fain present himself upon a more public Theater, come into the eye and croud of the world; but how little do's he know how he shall act his part there: whether he shall come off with a plaudite or a hiss? He may render himself but the more public spectacle of scorn; or if he do not that, he may by a better success feed up his vain glory to such a bulk, as may render him too great weight for that tottering pinnacle whereon he stands: and so after he has made a towering circle, he may fall back with more ignominy to his first point. Another it may be no less eagerly desires wealth, thinks (as once *Cræsus* did) that he that abounds in treasure cannot be empty of felicity; but alas how knows he how he shall employ it? There are two contrary temptations that attend riches; riots, and covetousness: and he is sure a little too confident, that dares promise himself that when there is such odds against him, he shall certainly chuse the one just mean:  
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and if he do not, he do's only inflame his account at the great Audit. Beside the more wealth he has, the fairer booty he is to the avarice of others; and it has bin often seen, that many a man had not died so poor, if he had lived less rich. Another perhaps thinks not himself so much to want wealth as children to heir it, and complains *with Abraham, Lord what wilt thou give me seeing I go childless?* Gen. 15. 2. yet how knows he whether that child he so much desires *shall be a wise man or a fool*, Eccle. 2. 19. a comfort or a vexation to himself if he live to see his proof? and if he do not, he do's but project for an access to his dying cares in what hands to leave him. *Rachel* solicited this satisfaction with the greatest impatience *give me children or I die*, Gen. 30. 1. and 'tis observable that the grant of her wish proved the loss of her life.

5. THUS in these and innumerable other instances we drive on blindfold, and very often impetuously pursue that which would ruin us; and were God as short-sighted as we, into what precipices should we minutely hurry our selves? or were he so unkind as to consider our importunity more then our interest, we should quick-

quickly sink under the weight of our own wishes; and as *Juvenal* in his tenth Satyr excellently observes, pettish by the success and grant of our Prayers. I suppose there is no man that soberly recollects the events of his life, but can experimentally say, he has sometimes desired things which would have bin to his mischief if he had had them, and that himself has after lookt on the denial as a mercy: as on the other side when he has prosper'd in his aims, and had what his soul lusted after, it has bin but like the quails to the *Israelites*, a conviction and punishment, rather than a satisfaction. And now surely God may complain of us as he did of *Israel*, *How long will it be ere you believe me?* Num. 14. 11. After all the attestations he has given of his care and Providence over us; after all the experiments we have had of the folly of our own elections, we cannot yet be brought either to distrust ourselves, or rely upon him. We will still be chusing, and look on him as no farther concern'd, than as the executioner of our designs.

6. THIS is certainly a strange perverseness, and such as no sensible man would be guilty of in any other instance. In all  
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our secular affaires we trust those whom we have cause to think understand them better then our selves, and rely upon men in their own faculty. We put our estates in the Lawyers hand, our bodies into the Physicians, and submit to their advice tho it be against our humor, merely because we account them more competent judges. Yet this deference we cannot be perswaded to pay to God, but will still be prescribing to him, and are very angry if his dispensations do not exactly answer our fancies. And can we offer him a greater affront then thus to distrust him? What is it but interpretatively to deny either his wisdom, or his goodness, or both? and so derogate from him in two of his essential attributes. For there can be no rational account given by any who believe those, why they should not remit their whole concerns to him. So that the short account is, that in our distrusts we either deny him to be God, or our selves to be men; by resisting the most evident dictates of that reason which distinguishes us from brutes. For certainly there is not in human discourse a more irrefragable Maxim, then that we ought for our own sakes to resign our selves to

to him, who we are infallibly sure, can, and will chuse better for us then we for ourselves.

7. THIS was so apparent by mere natural light, that *Socrates* advised men to pray only for blessings in general, and leave the particular kind of them to Gods election, who best knows what is good for us. And sure this is such a piece of divinity, as extremely reproches us Christians, who cannot match a Heathen in his implicit faith to God. Nay indeed 'tis the vilest defamation upon God himself, that we who pretend to know him more, should trust him less. So that we see our repinings do not terminate in their own proper guilt, but do in their consequences swell higher, and our discontents propagate themselves into Blasphemy. For while we impatiently complain of our wants, we do tacitly tax God to want either that wisdom, power, or love, whereby he should supply us. And sure he must be very Atheistical to whom this will not give a comperent prejudice against this sin.

8. AND this very consideration will equally prejudg the other branch of our discontents, I mean those which repine  
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at the ills we suffer. And not only our privative, but our positive afflictions may by it have their bitterness taken off : for the same goodness and wisdom which denies those things we like, because they are hurtful for us, do's upon the very same reason give us those distastful things which he sees profitable. A wise Physician do's not only diet, but if occasion be, purge his Patient also. And surely there is not such a purifier, such a cleanser of the soul as are afflictions, if we do not (like disorderly Patients) frustrate their efficacy by the irregular managery of our selves under them,

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## S E C T. VIII.

*Of the advantage of Afflictions.*

1. **I**T were the work of a volume to give an exact and minute account of the benefit of Afflictions. I shall only point at some of the more general and obvious. And first, it is one of the most awakening calls to repentance; and to this end it is that God most usually designs it. We see the whole scene of it, *Hof. 5. 15. I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledg their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early:* and in the very next verse we find this voice of God echoed forth by a penitential note, *Come, and let us return unto the Lord, for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up.* Thus we find the Brethren of *Joseph*, tho there had a long interval passed betwixt their barbarous usage of him, and his feigned rigor to them, yet when they saw themselves distressed by the one, then they begin to recollect the other,

other saying, *We are verily guilty concerning our brother*, Gen. 42. 21. Prosperity is an intoxicating thing, and there are few brains strong enough to bear it; it laies us asleep, and amuses us with pleasant dreams, whilst in the meantime *Satan* rifles our treasures, and spoils us, by the deceitful charms of sin, of our innocency and real happiness. And can there be a more friendly office done for a man in this condition, then to rouse him, and bring him to apprehend the designs that are laid against him? And this is the errand on which afflictions are sent: so that we have reason to look on them as our friends and confederates that intend our rescue, and to take the alarm they give us, and diligently seek out those intestine enemies of which they warn us. And he that instead of this, quarrels at their interposing, thinks them his enemies *because they tell him the truth*, Gal. 4. 16. does miserably pervert the counsel of God against himself, Luk. 7. 30. and may at last verify his own jealousies, and by so provoking an ingratitude, convert those into the wounds of an enemy, which were originally meant as the corrections of a Father.

2. AND as afflictions do thus in general admonish us of sins, so it pleases God most frequently so to model and frame them, that they bear the very image and impress of those particular guilts they are to chastise, and are the dark shadows that attend our gay delights, or flagrant insolencies. The Wise Man observes, that the turning the Egyptian Waters into Blood, was a manifest reproof of that cruel commandment for the murdering of the Hebrew Infants, *Wisd.* 12. 5. And surely we might in most, if not all our sufferings, see some such corresponding circumstances, as may lead us to the immediate provoking cause of it. God who does all things in number, weight, and measure, does in punishments also observe a symmetry and proportion, and adapts them not only to the heinousness, but even the very specific kind of our crimes. The only fixt immutable rule he has given for his Vice-gerents on earth to punish by, is that in the case of murder, which is we see grounded on this rule of proportion, *He that sheddeth mans blood, by man shall his blood be shed*, Gen. 9. 6. And tho he have now rescinded the inferior retaliations of the *eye for the eye, the tooth*  
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*for the tooth*, Exod. 21. 24. (probably for the hardness of our hearts, because he saw our revengeful natures would be too much pleased with it) yet he has not precluded himself from acting by those measures, but we see it do's very often signally make men feel the smart of those violencies or injustice they have used to others. Of this the Sacred story affords several examples (as *Adonibezek*, Jud. 1. 6. and *Abab*, 1 King. 21. 19.) and profane many more, and daily experience and observation most of all. And tho this method of retaliation is not alwaies so evident and apparent to the World, because mens sins are not alwaies so, yet I believe if men would duely recollect, it would be for the most part discernable to their own consciences, and they would apparently see, that their Calamities did but trace the footsteps of their sins.

3. Now if we rightly weigh this, we cannot but think it a very advantageous circumstance. We are naturally blind when we look inward, and if we have not some adventitious light to clear the object, will be very apt to overlook it. Therefore since the end of all our afflictions is our repentance, it is a wise and gracious disposal

posel, that they do thus point to us those particular sins of which we are to repent. The body of sin will not be destroyed in the whole entire bulk, but must be dismembred, pull'd to pieces limb by limb. He that attaques it otherwise, will be like *Sertorius's* soldier, who ineffectively tugg'd at the *Horses* tail to get it off at once, when he that pull'd it hair by hair quickly did it. Therefore as it is a great part of our spiritual Wisdom to know in what especial parts the *Sampson* like strength of our corruptions lie, so it is a great instance of Gods care of us, thus by his corrections to discipline and instruct us in it.

4. IN all our Afflictions therefore it is our concern, nicely and critically to observe them. I mean not to enhance our murmurings and complaints, but to learn by them what is Gods peculiar controversy against us. This is indeed *to hear the rod, and who hath appointed it*, Mic. 6. 9. Let him therefore that suffers in any of his concerns, examine whether he have not some corresponding guilt which answers to it, *as face answers face*, Prov. 27. 19. He that is impoverished in his estate, let him consider first how he acquired it, whether there were not something of fraud  
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or injustice, which like a cankerous humor, mixt in its very elements and constitution, and eat out its bowels; or whether some sacrilegious prize, some coal from the altar have not fired his nest; Or if nothing can be charged upon the acquiescent, let him consider how he has used it; whether he have not made it the fuel of his lusts, in riot and excesses, or the object of his adoration in an inordinate value of it. In like manner he who is afflicted in his body, groans under the torment of some grievous disease, may very seasonably interrogate himself, whether it have not bin contracted by his vice, whether *his bones be not* (in a more literal sense then *Job* meant it) *full of the sins of his youth*, *Job* 20. 11. and his surfeiting and drunkenness be not the cause, *that his soul*, as the Psalmist speaks, *abhors all manner of meat; and is even hard at death's door*, Psalm 107. 18. or at least whether the not employing his health and strength to those purposes for which 'twas given, is not the reason of its being withdrawn. He also that is invaded in his reputation, that lies under some great infamy, is to consider whether it be not deserved; whether some part, if not the whole guilt of which he

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is accused, stick not to him: or if he be clear in that particular instance, whether some concealed sin of his would not if it were known, incur as great scandal: for in that case he has in right forfeited his reputation, and God may make the seizure as well by an unjust, as a just accusation. Or if his heart accuse him not here, yet let him farther reflect, whether his vain-glorious pursuits of praise and high conceits of himself, have not made this an apt and necessary Humiliation for him. Or lastly, let him recollect how he has behaved himself towards others in this kind: whether he have had a just tenderness of his neighbors fame, or have not rather exposed and prostituted it. In these and many other instances such a particular scrutiny, would (in all probability) discover the affinity and cognation between our guilts and our punishments, and by marking out the Spring and Fountain-head, direct us how to stop or divert the Current. And he that would diligently employ himself in this Inquisition, would find little leisure, and less cause to condole his Afflictions, but would divert all his complaints upon himself, *accept of the punishment of his iniquity,*

ty, and thank the Lord for thus giving him warning, Psal. 16. 8.

5. A second benefit which God designs us in our Afflictions, is the weaning us from the World, to disentangle us from its fetters and charms, and draw us to himself. We read in the story of the *Deluge*, that so long as the Earth was covered with Waters, the very *Raven* was contented to take shelter in the Ark, but when all was fair and dry, even the *Dove* finally forsook it, *Gen.* 8. 12. And 'tis much so with us: the worst of men will commonly in distresses have recourse to God (the very Heathen Mariners in a storm could rebuke *Jonah* for not calling upon his God, *Jon.* 1. 6.) when yet the very best of us, are apt to forget him amidst the blandishments and insinuations of prosperity. The kind aspects of the World are very enchanting, apt to inveigle and besot us; and therefore it is Gods care over us, to let us sometimes see her more averting countenance in her frowns and storms; that, as Children frightened by some ugly appearance, we may run into the arms of our Father. Alas, were all things exactly fitted to our humors here, when should we think of a  
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remove? and had not Death some harbingers to prepare us for him, what a surprising guest would he be to us? 'Tis storied of *Antigonus*, that seeing a Soldier in his Camp of so daring a courage, that he alwaies courted the most hazardous attempts, and observing him also of a very infirm sickly habit, he took a particular care of him, and by Medicines and good attendance recovered him; which no sooner he had don, but the man grew more cautious, and would no longer expose himself as formerly; and gave this reason for it, that now he was healthy his life was of some value to him, and not to be hazarded at that same rate, as when it was only a burden; and should God cure all our complaints, render us perfectly at ease, I fear too many of us would be of the Soldiers mind, think our lives too good to resign to him, much more to hazard for him, as our Christianity in many cases obliges us. The son of *Syrach* observes, how *dreadful death is to a man that is at rest in his possessions, that hath abundance of all things, and hath nothing to vex him*; nay he descends much lower, and puts in him *who is yet able to receive meat*, Ecclus. 14. 1. The truth is, we do so passionately

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ly dote upon the world, that like besotted Lovers, we can bear a great deal of ill usage, before we quit our pursuit. Any little slight favor atones us after multiplied affronts; and we must be disciplined by repeated disappointments, ere we can withdraw our confidence. But how fatally secure should we be, if God should permit this Siren alwaies to entertain us with her music, and should not by some discordant grating notes, interrupt our raptures, and recall us to sober thoughts?

6. INDEED 'tis one of the highest instances of Gods love, and of his clemency also, thus to project our reducement. We were all in our Baptism affianced to him, with a particular abrenunciation of the world, so that we cannot without the greatest disloyalty cast our selves into its embraces; and yet when we have thus *broken the covenant of our God*, Prov. 2. 17, he does not pursue us with a jealous rage, with the severity which an abused rival'd kindness would suggest; doth not give us a bill of divorce and disclame his relation; but contrives how he may reclame and bring us back to himself. The transcendency of this lenity God excellently describes by the Prophet in the case of *Israel*;

*They say, if a man put away his wife, and she become another mans: shall he return unto her again? but thou hast plaid the harlot with many lovers, yet return unto me saith the Lord, Jer. 3. 1.* And this, tho a great height of Indulgence, is no more then he daily repetes to us. After we have basely adulterated with the World, converted our affections from God to it, he do's not give us over, abandon us to our leud course, and consequent ruin; but still invites our return: and lest that may not serve, he does with a great deal of Holy artifice essay to break that accursed League into which we are enter'd, pulls of the disguise in which the world courted us, and makes us see it as it is in it self, a scene of *vanity and vexation of spirit*, Eccles. 1. 14.

6. AND as he does this in general, so also with a particular application to those temporal satisfactions wherewith we were most transported. The things to which we are more indifferent do not so much endanger us; 'tis those upon which we have more vehemently set our hearts, which become our snares, and awake his jealousy; and accordingly we frequently see that 'tis in those he chuses to crosse us. How  
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often does it happen that those wick are enamored of themselves, dote upon their own Features, do meet with some disease or accident which blasts their Beauty, withers that fair Flower, and makes their Winter overtake their Spring? So in our Friends and Relations 'tis usually seen, we soonest loose those for whom we have the greatest, the most immoderate passion. If there be one fondling among our Childrén, 'tis odds but that is taken away, or make as much the object of our grief and sorrow, as ever it was of our joy and love. When God sees our hearts so excessively cleave to any transitory thing, he knows 'tis necessary to sever them, for whil'st we have such clogs upon us, *our souls will cleave to the dust*, Psalm 119. 1. will not be able to soar up to the higher Region for which they are design'd.

7. IN a word, God so loves us, that he removes whatever he sees will obstruct that intimate union which he desires with us; and sure this is so obliging, that tho he should bid us to our loss, tho he could not recompence us for what he takes from us, yet we must be very ill natur'd if we can be angry at so much kindness. But  
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when to this is added, that all this is principally, nay solely design'd for our advantage, that God takes from us all these emty delusory contentments, merely that he may instate us in solid and durable joies; we betray as much ignorance of our interest, as insensibleness of our obligation, if we repine that God makes us so much his care. 'Tis true indeed, the things to which we have so inordinately adhered, do stick so close, that they cannot be pull'd away without some pain: yet for our corporal security we can endure the fundring of parts that do not only cleave, but grow to us. He that has a gangrend member, suffers it to be cut off to save his whole body, and do's not revile, but thank and reward the Chirurgion. Yet where our souls are concern'd, and where the things have no native union with us, but are only cemented by our passions, we are impatient of the method, and think God deals very hardly with us, not to let us perish with what we love. The sum of all is this, God, tho he be abundantly condescending, yet he will never stoop so low as to share his interest in us with the world: if we will devote our selves to it, 'tis not all our emty forms of service will satisfy him



him; if we cannot divorce our hearts from it, he will divorce himself eternally from us. And the case being thus, we are sure very ill advised if we do not contentedly resign our selves to his methods, & cheerfully endure them how sharp soever. The only expedient we have for our own case, is to shorten the cure by giving our assistance, and not by strugglings to render it more difficult and painful. Let us entirely surrender our wills to him, and when we have don that, we may without much pain let him take any thing else. But the more difficult we find it to be disentangled from the World, the greater should our caution be against all future engagements to it. If our escape hath bin as the Apostle saies, *so as by fire*, Jude 23. with much smart and hazard, let us at least have so much wit, as the common Proverb allows children, and not again expose our selves: let us never glue our hearts to any external thing, but let all the concerns of the World hang loose about us: by that means we shall be able to put them off insensibly when ever God calls for them, or perhaps we shall prevent his calling for them at all, it being for the most part our too close adhesion to them which prompts him to it.

8. A third advantage of afflictions is, that it is a mark and signature of our adoption, a witness of our legitimation. *What son is he (saith the Apostle) whom the Father chastiseth not? but if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons,* Heb. 12. 7.

8. *Jacob* clad his darling *Joseph* in a party-coloured Coat, and Gods favorites do here wear a Livery inter-woven with a mixture of dark and gloomy colours; their *long white robes* are laid up for them against they come to the *marriage of the Lamb*, Rev. 19. 7. Indeed we much mistake the design of Christianity, if we think it calls us to a condition of ease and security. It might suit well enough with the Votaries of the Golden Calf, to *sit down to eat and drink, and rise up to play*, Exod. 32. 6. but the Disciples of the crucified Savior are trained to another discipline, our profession enters us into a state of warfare, and accordingly our very Baptismal engagement runs all in military terms, and we are not only Servants of Christs Family, but Soldiers of his Camp. Now we know in a War men must not expect to pass their time in ease and softness, but besides all the dangers and difficulties

ficulties of the combat, have many other hardships to endure; hunger and thirst, heat and cold, hard lodgings and weary marches: and he that is too nice for those, will not long stick to his colours. And it is the same in our spiritual warfare: many pressures and sufferings are annexed to it, and our passive valor is no less tried then our active. In respect of this it is that our Savior admonishes his Profelytes to compute first the difficulties incident to their profession, and that he may not ensnare us by proposing too easy terms, he bids us reckon up the worst, and tells us, that *he that forsakes not all that he hath, shall not be his disciple*, Luke 14. 26. *and that we must thro much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God*, Acts 14. 22. Indeed, 'twere very absurd for us to expect easier conditions, when these are the same to which our Leader has submitted. The *Captain of our Salvation was perfected by sufferings*, Heb. 2. 10. *and if it behooved Christ to suffer before he enter'd into his glory*, Luke 24. 46. it were insolent madness for us to look to be carried thither upon our beds of Ivory, or from the noise of our Harps and Viols, be immediatly rapt into the Choir of Angels.

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8. **THIS** has bin so much consider'd by pious men, that they have lookt upon their secular prosperities with fear and jealousy, and many have solemnly petition'd for crosses, as thinking them the necessary attestation of their son-ship, and means of assimilation to their elder brother. Why then should that which was so desirable to them, appear so formidable to us? or why should we so vehemently deprecate, what they so earnestly invited? If we indeed think it a privilege to be the sons of God, and fellow-heirs with Christ, why do we grudge at the condition? The Roman Captain tells *St. Paul*, that he obtained the immunities of a Roman *with a great sum*, Acts 22. 28. and shall we expect so much a nobler and more advantageous adoption perfectly *gratis*? look that God should change his whole Oeconomy for our ease, give us an Eternal Inheritance, discharged of those Temporal Incumbrances himself has annexed to it? This were sure as unjust a hope, as it would be a vain one. When *David* had that ensnared proposal made him, of being the Kings son in Law, 1 *Sam.* 18. 21. he set such a value upon the dignity, that he despised the difficulty of the condition: and sure

sure we must have very low abject souls, if when so infinitely a higher advancement is sincerely offer'd us, we can suffer any apprehension of hardship to divert us. In a word, let us remember that of the Apostle, *if we suffer, we shall also reign with him*, 2 Tim. 2. 12. And tho our afflictions be in themselves not joious but grievous, yet when they are consider'd as the earnest of our future inheritance, they put on another face, and may rather enamor then fright us.

9. A fourth advantage of afflictions is, that they excite our compassions towards others: there is nothing qualifies us so rightly to estimate the suffering of others, as the having our selves felt them: without this our apprehensions of them are as dull and confused, as a blind man's of colours, or a deaf man of sounds. They *that stretch themselves upon their couches, that eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall: that chaunt to the sound of the viol, drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments, will not much be grieved with the afflictions of Joseph*, Amos 6. 4. Nay so necessary is our experience towards our commiseration, that we see 'twas thought a requisite

accomplishment of our High Priest (that highest example of unbounded compassion) and therefore saith the Apostle, *It behooved him in all things to be made like his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people; for in that he himself hath suffer'd being tempted, he is able also to succor them that are tempted*, Heb. 2.17, 18. But if he whose mere sense of our miseries brought him down to us, chose this expedient to advance his pity, how necessary is it to our petrified bowels? And since God has assign'd our mercies to our Brethren, as the standard by which he will proportion his to us, 'tis more ours than their advantage to have them enlarged: so that when by making us tast of their cup, acquainting us with the bitter relish of their sufferings; he prepares us to a Christian sympathy with them, 'tis but a remoter way of obliging and qualifying us for a more ample portion of his mercy. Nay besides the profit, there is honor accrues to us by it. Compassion is one of the best properties of our nature, and we unman our selves when we put it off; nay more, 'tis an attribute of the Divinity,

vinity, and the more we advance in it, the closer approaches we make to him. And therefore we have all reason to bless him for that discipline by which he promotes us in so excellent, so necessary a grace.

10. A fifth benefit of affliction, is, that it is an improvement of Devotion, sets us with more heartiness to our Praiers. Whil'st Prosperity flows in upon us, we bath our selves in its streams, but are very apt to forget its source; so that God is fain to stop the current, leave us dry and parched, that our needs may make us do what our gratitude would not, trace our blessings up to the original spring, and both acknowledg and invoke him as the Author of all our good. This effect of afflictions is observ'd by the Prophet, *Lord, in trouble have they visited thee, they poured out a praier when thy chastning was upon them*, Isa. 26. 16. And I believe I may appeal to every mans experience, whether his Praiers be not more frequent and more hearty too, when he is under some distrefs. Then how importunate are we in our Petitions? how profuse in our Vows and Promises? saying with *Israel*, *Deliver us only we pray thee this day: and they put away the strange Gods from among them,*  
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*and served the Lord*, Jud. 10. 15. I confess, 'tis no good indication of our temper, that we need thus to be put in the press ere we will yield any thing. yet since we are so disingenuous, 'tis a mercy in God to adapt his methods to us, to extort when we will not give; and if he can have no free-will-offerings, yet at least to exact his tribute. Nor do's he design the effect of this should cease with the calamity that rais'd it, but expects our compell'd addresses should bring us into the way of voluntary ones, and happily ensnare us into Piety. And indeed herein we are worse then brutish if it do not. We think it a barbarous rudeness to engage a man in our affairs, and as soon as we have served our own turns, never take farther notice of him. Nay indeed the very beasts may lecture us in this piece of Morality, many of them paying a signal gratitude where they have received benefits: and shall we not come up at least to their pitch? shall not the endearment of our deliverance bring our deliverer into some repute & consideration with us, and make us desire to keep up an acquaintance and entercourse with him? Yet if ingenuity work not with us, let interest at least prevail,



vail, and the remembrance how soon we may need him again, admonish us not to make our selves strangers to him. God complains of *Israel*, *Wherefore say my people, we are Lords? we will come no more at thee*, Jer. 2. 31. A very insolent folly to renounce that dependance by which alone they subsisted, and no less will it be in any of us if we stop our recourse to him because we have had advantage by it. We have no assurance that the same occasion shall not recur, but with what face can we then resume that intercourse which in the interval we despised? So that if we have but any ordinary Providence we shall still so celebrate past rescues, as to continue in a capacity of begging more, and then we cannot but also confess the benefit of those first calamities which inspirited our devotion, and taught us to pray in earnest, and will be ashamed that our Thanks should be utter'd in a fainter accent than our Petitions; or our daily Spiritual Concerns should be more coldly solicited than our Temporal accidental ones.

II. NOR is it only our devotion that is thus improved by our distresses, but many other Graces; our Faith, our Hope, our  
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Patience, our Christian Sufferance and Fortitude. It is no triumph of Faith to trust God for those good things which he gives us in hand, this is rather to walk by sense than Faith, but to rely on him in the greatest destitution, *and against hope to believe in hope*, this is the Faith of a true child of *Abraham*, and will be imputed to us (as it was to him) *for righteousness*, Rom. 4. 23. So also our Patience owes all its opportunities of exercise to our Afflictions, and consequently owes also a great part of its being to them, for we know desuetude will lose habits. What imaginable use is there of Patience, where there is nothing to suffer? In our prosperous state, we may indeed employ our Temperance, our Humility, our Caution; but Patience seems then a useless Vertue: nay indeed, for ought we know, may be counterfeit, till adversity bring it to the test. And yet this is the most glorious accomplishment of a Christian, that which most eminently conforms him to the Image of his Savior, whose whole life was a perpetual exercise of this grace; and therefore we love our ease too well if we are unwilling to buy this Pearl at any price.

12. LASTLY, Our thankfulness is (at least ought to be) increas'd by our distresses. 'Tis very natural for us to reflect with value and esteem upon those Blessings we have lost, and we too often do it to aggravate our discontent: but sure, the more rational use of it is to raise our thankfulness for the time wherein we enjoyed them. Nay not only our former enjoyments, but even our present deprivations deserve our gratitude, if we consider the happy advantages we may reap from them. If we will perversly cast them away, that unworthy contentt paies no scores, for we still stand answerable in Gods account for the good he design'd, and we might have had by it, and we become liable to a new charge for our ingratitude in thus *despising the chastisement of the Lord*, Heb. 12. 5.

13. And now if all these benefits of afflictions (which are yet but imperfectly recited) may be thought worth considering, it cannot but reconcile us to the sharpest of Gods methods; unless we will own our selves such mere Animals, as to have no other apprehensions then what our bodily senses convey to us. For sure, he that has reason enough to under-  
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stand that he has an immortal soul, cannot but assent that its interests should be served, tho with the displacency of his flesh. Yet even in regard of that, our murmurings are oft very unjust, for we do many times ignorantly prejudg Gods designs towards us even in Temporals, who frequently makes a little transient uneasiness the passage to secular felicities. *Moses* when he fled out of *Egypt*, probably little thought that he should return thither a *God unto Pharaoh*, *Exod. 4. 16.* and as little did *Joseph* when he was brought thither a slave, that he was to be a Ruler there; yet as distant as those states were, the Divine Providence had so connected them, that the one depends upon the other. And certainly we may often observe the like over-ruling hand in our own distresses, that those events which we have entertained with the greatest regret, have in the consequences bin very beneficial to us.

14. To conclude, we have certainly both from speculation and experience, abundant matter to calm all our disquiets, to satisfy our distrusts, and to fix in us an entire resignation to Gods disposals, who has designs which we cannot penetrate, but none which we need fear, unless we

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our selves pervert them. We have our Saviors word for it, that *he will not give us a stone when we ask bread, nor a scorpion when we ask a fish*, Matth. 7. 9. Nay his love secures us yet farther from the errors of our own wild choice, and do's not give us those stones and scorpions which we importune for. Let us then leave our concerns to him who best knows them, and make it our sole care to entertain his dispensations with as much submission and duty, as he dispences them with love and wisdom. And if we can but do so, we may dare all the power of Earth and Hell too, to make us miserable : for be our afflictions what they can : we are sure they are but what we in some respect or other need ; be they privative or positive, the want of what we wish, or the suffering of what we wish not, they are the disposals of him who cannot err, and we shall finally have cause to say with the Psalmist, *It is good for me that I have bin afflicted*, Psalm 119. 71.

## S E C T: IX.

*Of our Misfortunes compared with  
other mens.*

**W**E come now to impress an equally just and useful consideration, the comparing our Misfortunes with those of other mens: and he that does that, will certainly see so little cause to think himself singular, that he will not find himself superlative in calamity; for there is no man living that can with reason affirm himself to be the very unhappiest man, there being innumerable distresses of others which he knows not of, and consequently cannot bring them in balance with his own. A multitude of men there are whose persons he knows not, and even of those he does, he may be much a stranger to their distresses; many sorrows may lie at the heart of him who carries a smiling face, and many a man has bin an object of envy to those who look but on the surface of his state, who yet to those who know his private griefs appears more worthy of compassion. And sure this confused uncertain

tain estimate of other mens afflictions, may divert us from all loud out-cries of our own *Solon* seeing a friend much oppress'd with grief, carried him up to a Town that over-lookt the City of *Athens*, and shewing him all the Buildings, said to him, Consider how many sorrows have, do, and shall in future Ages inhabit under all those roofs, and do not vex thy self with those inconveniencies which are common to mortality, as if they were only yours. And sure 'twas good advice: for suffering is almost as inseparable an adjunct of our nature, as dying is: yet we do not see men very apt to imbitter their whole lives by the fore-sight that they must die, but seeing it a thing as universal as inevitable, they are more forward to take up the Epicures resolution, *Let us eat and drink, for to morrow we die*, 1 Cor. 15. 32: And why should we not look upon afflictions also as the common lot of humanity, and as we take the advantages, so be content to bear the incumbrances of that state?

2. But besides that implicite allowance that is thus to be made for the unknown calamities of others, if we survey but those that lie open and visible to us, the most of us shall find enough to discount-

countenance our complaints. Who is there that when he has most studiously recollected his miseries, may not find some or other that apparently equals, if not exceeds him? He that stomacs his own being contemn'd and slighted, may see another persecuted and oppress'd. He that groans under some sharp pain, may see another afflicted with sharper: and even he that has the most acute torments in his body, may see another more sadly cruciated by the agonies of his mind. So that if we would but look about us, we should see so many foreign occasions of our pity, that we should be asham'd to confine it wholly to our selves.

3. It will perhaps be said, that this cannot be universally true, for that there must in comparative degrees be some lowest state of misery: I grant it, but still that state consists not in such an indivisible point, that any one person can have the inclosure; or if it do, 'twill be so hard for any to discern who that one person is, that I need desire no fairer a composition, then to have every man suspend his repinings, till he can evince his title. But alas, there are but few that can make any approaches to such a pretence: for tho if we advert

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to mens complaints, we should think all degrees of comparifon were confounded, and every man were equally the greateft sufferer; yet certainly in the truth of things 'tis nothing fo: for (not to repete what was before mention'd, that probably no man is miserable in any proportion to the utmoft degree of poffibility) the remarkably unhappy are very far the lefs number. And how paffionately foever men exaggerate their Calamities, yet perhaps in their fober mood, they will fcarce change ftates with thofe whom they profefs to think more happy then themfelves. It was the faying of *Socrates*, that if there were a common bank made of all mens troubles, moft men would rather chufe to take thofe they brought, then to venture upon a new dividend. And indeed he had reafon for his fuppoftition; for confidering how great a part of many mens afflictions are of their own making, fictitious and imaginary, they may juftly fear leaft they fhould exchange feathers for lead, their own emty fhadows for the real and preffing calamities of others, and cannot but think it beft to fit down with their own, which ferves their declamations as well, and their eafe much better. We  
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oft see men at a little mis-shaping of a garment, a scarce discernable error in their Cook, or their shortest interruption in their sports, in such transports of trouble, as if they were the most unfortunate men in the World; yet for all that you shall hardly perswade them to change with him whose course clothings supersedes all care of the fashion, whose appetite was never disappointed for want of sawce, and whose perpetual toil makes him insensible what the defeat of sport signifies.

4. NAY even where the exchange seems more equal, where the afflictions are on both sides solid and substantial, yet a prudent man would scarce venture upon the barter. 'Tis no small advantage to know what we have to contest with, to have experimented the worst of its attacks, by which we become better able to guard our selves: but a new evil comes with the force of a surprise, and finds us open and disarmed. It is indeed almost a miraculous power that custom has in reconciling us to things otherwise displeasing; all our senses are taught to remit of their aversion by familiarity with ungrateful objects: that ugly form which at first makes us start, by use devests its  
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terror, and we reconcile our selves to harsh sounds & ill relishes by long custom. And sure it has the very same effect upon our minds, the most fierce calamities do by acquaintance grow more tractable; so that he that exchanges an old one for a new: do's but bring a wild Lion into his house instead of a tame: it may for ought he knows immediatly tear him in pieces, but at least must cost him a great deal of pains to render it gentle and familiar, and certainly no wise man would wish to make such a bargain.

5. BY all this it appears that how extravagantly soever we aggravate our own calamities and extenuate other mens, we dare not upon recollection stand to our own estimate, and what can be said more in prejudice of our discontents? 'Tis a granted maxim that every man must have afflictions, *man that is born of a woman, saies Job, is of few years, and full of trouble,* Job 13. 4. and we must reverse Gods fundamental law, before we can hope for a total exemption. All that any man can aspire to, is to have but an equal share with others, and the generality of men have so, at least none can prove he has not so; and till he can, his murmurs will sure be

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very unjustifiable, especially when they have this convincing circumstance against them, that he dares not upon sober thoughts change his afflictions with most of his neighbors. He is an ill member of a community, who in public assessments would shuffle off all payments : and he is no better, who in this common tax God has laid upon our nature, is not content to bear his share.

6. AND truly would we but consider that in all our sufferings nothing befalls us but what is common to our kind, nay which is extremely exceeded by many within the verge of our own observation, we must be senselessly partial to be impatient. The Apostle thought it a competent consolation for the first Christians, that *there had no temptation befallen them but what was common to men*, 1 Cor. 10, 13. and we betray very extravagant opinions of our selves if it be not so to us. Indeed 'twas scarce possible for us to be so unsatisfied, as the greatest part of us are, did we in the comparing our selves with others, proceed with any tolerable ingenuity.

7. BUT alas we are very fallacious and deceitful in the point, we do not compare

pare the good of others with our good, nor their evil with our evil; but with an envious curiosity we amass together all the desirable circumstances of our neighbors condition, and with as prying discontent we ransack all our grievances, and confront to them. This is so insincere a way of proceeding, as the most ordinary understanding can detect. If I should wager that my arm were longer than another mans, and for tryal measure my arm with his finger, he must be stupidly silly, that should award for me; and yet this were not a grosser cheat, than that which we put upon our selves, in our comparisons with others. And 'tis a little strange to observe unto what various purposes we can apply this one thin piece of Sophistry, for when we compare our neighbors and our selves in point of morality, we do but reverse the fallacy, and presently make his vices as much exceed ours, as our calamities did his in the other instance. They are indeed both great violences to reason and justice, yet the latter is sure the pleasanter kind of deceit. A man has some joy in thinking himself less wicked than his neighbor, but what imaginable comfort can he take in think-

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ing himself more miserable? certainly he that would submit to a couzenage, had much better shift the scene, and think his sufferings less then they are, rather then more: for since opinion is the thing that usually sets an edg upon our calamities, it might be a profitable deceit that could steal that from us.

8. B U T we need not blindfold our selves if we would but use our eies aright, and see things in their true shapes; and if we did thus, what a strange turn would there be in the common estimates of the world? How many of the gilded troubles of greatness, which men at a distance look on with so much admiration and desire, would then be as much contemned as now they are courted? A competency would then get the better of abundance, and the now envied pomp of princes, when balanced with the cares and hazards annext, would be so far from a bait, that men like *Saul*, 1 Sam. 10. 22. would *hide themselves* from the preferment; and he that understood the weight, would rather choose to weild a Flayle then a Scepter: yet so childishly are we befotted with the glittering appearance of things, that we conclude felicity must needs dwell where  
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there is a magnificent Portico, and being possess'd with this fancy we over-look her in our own humbler Cottages, where she would more constantly reside, if she could but find us at home: but we are commonly engag'd in a rambling pursuit of her where she is seldome to be found, and in the interim miss of her at her own doors.

9. INDEED there is scarce a greater folly or unhappiness incident to mans nature, then this fond admiration of other mens enjoyments, and content of our own. And whilst we have that humour, it will supplant not only our present, but all possibilities of our future content: for tho we could draw to our selves all those things for which we envy others, we should have no sooner made them our own, then they will grow despicable and nauseous to us. This is a speculation which has bin attested by innumerable experiments, there being nothing more frequent, then to see men with impatient eagerness, nay often with extreme hazards pursue those acquests, which when they have them, they are immediatly sick of. There is scarce any man that may not give himself instances of this in his own particular: and yet so fatally stupid are we, that no de-

feats will discipline us or take us off from the false estimates of other mens happinesses. And truly while we state our comparisons so unequally, they are as mischievous as the common proverb speaks them odious : but if we would begin at the right end, and look with as much compassion on the adversities of our brethren, as we do with envy on their prosperities, every man would find cause to sit down contentedly with his own burden, and confess that he bears but the proportionable share of his common nature, unless perhaps it be where some extraordinary demerits of his own have added to the weight; and in that case he has more reason to admire his afflictions are so few, then so many. And certainly every man knows so many more ills by himself, then it is possible for him to do by another, that he that really sees himself exceed others in his sufferings, will find cause enough to think he do's in sins also.

10. B U T if we stretch the comparison beyond our contemporaries, and look back to the generations of old, we shall have yet farther cause to acknowledg Gods great indulgence to us. *Abraham* tho the friend of God was not exempted from severe



vere trials; he was first made to wander from his Country, and betake himself to a kind of vagrant life, was a long time suspended from the blessing of his desired off-spring, and when at last his beloved *Isaac* was obtained, it caused a domestic jarr, which he was fain to compose by the expulsion of *Ishmael*, tho his son also. But what a contest may we think there was in his own bowels, when that rigorous task was imposed on him of sacrificing his *Isaac*? and tho his faith gloriously triumphed over it, yet sure there could not be a greater pressure upon human nature. *David* the man after Gods own heart is no less signal for his afflictions then for his piety, he was for a great while an exile from his Country, and (which he most bewailed) from the Sanctuary by the persecutions of *Saul*: and after he was settled in that throne to which Gods immediate assignation had intitled him, what a succession of calamities had he in his own family? the incestuous rape of his Daughter, the retaliation of that by the unnatural murder of *Ammon*, and that seconded by another no less barbarous conspiracy of *Ab-solom* against himself, his expulsion from *Jerusalem*, the base revilings of *Shimei*,  
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and finally the loss of that dearling son in the act of his sin. A cluster of afflictions in comparison whereof the most of ours are but like the gleanings (as the Prophet speaks) *after the vintage is done*. It were indeed endless to instance in all the several Fore-fathers of our Faith before *Christs* Incarnation, the Apostle gives us a brief, but very comprehensive compendium of their sufferings, *They had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings; yea moreover, of bonds and imprisonments: they were stoned, were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheep-skins, and goat-skins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented: they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens, and in caves of the earth*, Heb. 11. 36, 37, 38. And if we look on the Primitive Christians, we shall see them perfectly the counterpart to them, their privileges consisted not in any immunities from calamities; for their whole lives were scenes of sufferings. St. Paul gives us an account of his own, *in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft: of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I*  
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*stoned, thrice I suffer'd shipwrack, a night and a day have I bin in the deep, in journeying often, &c.* 2 Cor. 11. 23. and if his single hardships rose thus high, what may we think the whole sum of all his fellow-laborers amounted to together, with that noble Army of martyrs who sealed their faith with their blood; of whose sufferings *Ecclesiastic* history gives us such astonishing relations.

II. AND now *being compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses*, the Apostles inference is very irrefragable, *let us run with patience the race which is set before us*, Heb. 12. 1, 2. But yet it is more so, if we proceed on to that consideration he adjoins, *Looking unto Jesus the Author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endur'd the cross, despising the shame*, verse 3. Indeed if we contemplate him in the whole course of his life, we shall find him rightly stiled by the Prophet *a man of sorrows*, Isai. 51. And as if he had charged himself with all our griefs as well as our sins, there is scarce any human calamity which we may not find exemplified in him. Do's any complain of the lowness and poverty of his condition? Alas his whole life was a  
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state of indigence: he was forced to be an inmate with the beasts, he laid in a stable at his birth, and after himself professes that he *had not where to lay his head*, Luk. 9. 58. Is any oppressed with infamy and reproach? he may see his Savior accus'd as *a glutton and a wine-bibber*, Luke 7. 34. *a Blasphemer*, Joh. 10. 33. *a Sorcerer*, Mat. 12. 24. *a perverter of the nation*, Luk. 23. 2. yea to such a sordid lowness had they sunk his repute, that a seditious thief and murderer was thought the more eligible person, *not this man but Barabbas*, Joh. 18. 40. And finally all this scene of indignities clos'd with the spiteful pageantry of *mockery* acted by the soldiers, Mat. 27. 28. and the yet more barbarous insultings of Priests and Scribes, verse 41. Is any man despised or deserted by his friends? he was contemned by his country-men, thought frantic by his friends, betrayed by one of his disciples, abandon'd by all, unless that one who followed him longest, to renounce him the most shamefully by a three-fold abjuration. Nay what is infinitely more than this, he seem'd deserted by God also, as is witnessed by that doleful exclamation, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Mat. 27. 64. Is any  
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ny dissatisfied with his hard-ships or laboriousness of his life? let him remember his Saviors was not a life of delicacy or ease: he was never enter'd in those Academies of luxury, where men are *gorgeously apparel'd and live delicately*, Luk. 7. 25. but he was brought under the mean roof of a Carpenter, and consequently subjected to all the lowness of such an education. His initiation to his Prophetic office was with the miraculous severity of a 40. daies fast, and in his discharge of it, we find him in perpetual labors, *going about doing good*, Act. 10. 38, and that not in triumph, like a prince bestowing his largesses, but in weary peregrinations, never riding but once, and that only upon a borrow'd beast, *and to fulfil a prophecy*, Mat. 24. Do's any man groan under sharp and acute pains? let him consider what his redeemer endured, how in his infancy at his circumcision he offer'd the first fruits, as an earnest of that bloody vintage when *he trod the wine-press alone* Isaiah 63. 3. Let him attend him thro all the stages of his direful passion, and behold his arms pinion'd w<sup>th</sup> rough cords, his head smote with a reed, and torn with his crown of thorns, his back ploughed

with those *long furrows* (Psal. 120. 3.) the scourges had made; his macerated feeble body opprest with the weight of his cross, and at last rackt and extended on it; his hands and feet, those nervous & consequently most sensible parts transfixt with nailes, his whole body fastned to that accursed tree, and exposed naked to the air in a cold season; his throat parched with thirst, and yet more afflicted with that vinegar and gall wherewith they pretended to relieve him; and finally his life expiring amidst the full sense of these accurate torments. Lastly do's any man labor under the bitterest of all sorrows, importunate temptations to, or a wounded spirit for sin? even here also he may find that he has an *high Priest who hath bin touched with the sense of his infirmities*, Heb. 4. 15. He was violently assaulted with a succession of temptations, Mat. 4. and we cannot doubt but Satan would on him employ the utmost of his skill. Nor was he less opprest with the burden of sin, ours I mean, tho not his own. What may we think were his apprehensions in the Garden, when he so earnestly deprecated that which was his whole errand into the world? What a dreadful  
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pressure was that which wrung from him that bloody sweat, and cast him into that inexplicable agony, the horror whereof was beyond the comprehensions of any but his who felt it? And finally how amazing was the sense of divine wrath, which extorted that stupendious complaint, that *strong cry* on the cross, Heb. 5. 7. the sharp accent whereof, if it do a-right sound on our hearts, must certainly quite overwhelm our loudest groans? And now certainly I may say with Pilate, *Ecce homo*, behold the man, or rather with a more divine Author, Behold *if ever there were sorrows like unto his sorrow*, Lam. I. 12.

12. AND sure it were but a reasonable inference, that which we find made by Christ himself, *if these things be don in a green tree, what shall be don in the dry?* Luk. 23. 31. If an imputative guilt could nourish so scorching a flame, pull down so severe a wrath; what can we expect who are merely made up of combustible matter, whose proper personal sins cry for vengeance? Sure were we to judg by human mesures, we should reckon to have more then a double portion of our Saviors sufferings entail'd upon us: yet such is the efficacy of his, that they have commuted  
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for ours, & have left us only such a share, as may evidence our relation to our crucified Lord: such as may serve only for badges and cognizances to whom we retain. For alas, let the most afflicted of us weigh our sorrows with his, how absurdly unequal will the comparison appear? And therefore as the best expedient to baffle our mutinies, to shame us out of our repinings, let us often draw this uneven parallel, confront our petty uneasinesses with his unspeakable torments; and sure 'tis impossible but our admiration and gratitude must supplant our impatiencies.

13. THIS is indeed the method to which the Apostle directs us, *Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be weary and faint in your minds, ye have not yet resisted unto blood,* Heb. 12. 34. Was he contradicted, and shall we expect to be humor'd and compli'd with? Did he resist to blood & shall we think those pressures intolerable, which force only a few tears from us? This is such an unmanly niceness, as utterly makes us unfit to follow the Captain of our Salvation. What a soldier is he like to make, that will take no share of the hazards and hardships of His General? Honest Uriah would



would not take the lawful solaces of his own house, upon the consideration that his *Lord Joab* (tho but his fellow subject) *lay incamped in the open fields*, 2 Sam. II. II. yea tho he was sent by him from the Camp. And shall we basely forsake ours in pursuit of our ease? He is of a degenerate spirit, whom the example of his superior will not animate. *Plutarch* tells us, that *Cato* marching thro the desarts, was so distressed for water, that a small quantity was brought to him in a helmet as a great prize, which he refusing because he could not help his soldiers to the like, they were so transported with that generosity, that it extinguish'd the sense of their thirst, and they were ashamed to complain of what their Leader voluntarily endur'd for their sakes. And surely we extremely discredit our institution, if we cannot equal their ingenuity; and follow ours with as great alacrity thro all the difficulties he has traced before us, and for us.

14. N O R let us think to excuse ourselves upon the impotency of our flesh, which wants the assistance which his divinity gave him: for that plea is superseded by the fore-mention'd examples of the Saints, men of like passions with us,  
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who not only patiently, but joyfully endure'd all tribulations; by which it appears it is not impossible to our nature, with those aids of grace which are common to us with them: for certainly the difference between them and us, is not so much in the degrees of the aids, as in the diligence of employing them. Let us therefore, as the Apostle advises, *lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees*, Heb. 12. 12. and with a noble emulation follow those heroic patterns they have set us. And since we see that even those Favorites of heaven, have smarted so severely, let us never dream of an immunity; but when ever we find our selves inclining to any such flattering hope, let every one of us upbraid our selves in those terms the *Jews* did our Savior, *Art thou greater then Abraham, and the Prophets, whom makest thou thy self?* Joh. 8. 52. Nay we may descend lower and take in not only all the inferior Saints of former times, but all those our contemporaries in sufferings, which are most within our view, and may ask the Apostles question, *what then? are we better then they?* Rom. 3. 9. If we think we are, 'tis certain we are so much worse by that insolence; and if we confess we are not, upon

on what score can we pretend to be better treated? To conclude, let us not pore only upon our peculiar evils, but attentively look about us, and consider what others endure : and since in frolics we can sport our selves with many uneasinesses for company sake, let us not be more pusillanimous in our soberer moods, but every man cheerfully take his turn in bearing the common burden of mortality, till we put off both it and its appendages together, when this mortal shall put on immortality, 1 Cor. 15. 54.

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SECT.

## SECT. X.

*Of particular Aids for the gaining  
of Contentment.*

1. **W**E have now past thro all those considerations we at first proposed; and may trust the considering Reader to make his own collections: yet because impatience is the vice that has bin all this while arraigned, I am to fore-see if possible, that those who have the greatest degree of that, may be the least willing to attend the whole process; and therefore I think it may not be amiss, for their ease to suit and reduce all into some short directions and rules for the acquiring contentment.

2. **T**HE first and most fundamental is, the mortifying our pride, which as it is the seminary of most sins, so especially this of repining. Men that are highly opinion'd of themselves are commonly unsatisfiable: for how well soever they are treated, they still think it short of their merits. Princes have often experimented  
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this in those who have don them signal services; but God finds it in those who have don him none, and we expect he shall dispense to us according to those false estimates we put upon our selves. Therefore he that aspires to Content, must first take truer measures of himself, and consider that as he was nothing till God gave him a being, so all that he can produce from that being, is Gods by original right, and therefore can pretend to nothing of reward; so that whatever he receives, is still upon the account of a new bounty; and to complain that he has no more, is like the murmurs of an unthankful debtor, who would still encrease those scores which he knows he can never pay.

3. IN the second place, let every man consider how many blessings ( notwithstanding his no claim to any ) he daily enjoys: and whether those he so impatiently raves after be not much inferior to them. Nay let him ask his own heart, whether he would quit all those he has, for them he wants; and if he would not ( as I suppose no man in his wits would, those wits being part of the parter ) let him then judg how unreasonable his repinings are, when himself confesses he has the better part of

worldly happiness, and never any man living had all.

4. IN the third place therefore let him secure his duty of thankfulness for those good things he hath, and that will insensibly undermine his impatiencies for the rest, it being impossible to be at once thankful and murmuring. To this purpose it were very well, if he would keep a solemn catalogue of all the bounties, protections, and deliverances he has receiv'd from Gods hand, and every night examin what accessions that day has brought to the sum: and he that did this, would undoubtedly find so many incitations to gratitude, that all those to discontent would be stifled in the croud. And since acknowledgment of Gods mercies is all the tribute he exacts for them, we must certainly look on that as an indispensable duty; and therefore he that finds that God shortens his hand, stops the efflux of his bounty towards him, should reflect on himself, whether he be not behind in that homage by which he holds, and have not by his unthankfulness *turn'd away good things from him*, Esa. 59. 8. And if he find it so (as who alas is there that may not?) he cannot sure for  
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shame complain, but must in prudence reinforce his gratitude for what is left, as the best means to recover what he has lost.

5. BUT his murmurs will yet be more amazingly silenc'd, if in the fourth place he compares the good things he enjoys with the ill he has don. Certainly this is a most infallible cure for our impatiencies, the holiest man living being able to accuse himself of such sins, as would according to all human measures of equity forfeit all blessings, & pull down a greater weight of judgment than the most miserable groan under. Therefore as before I advis'd to keep a catalogue of benefits receiv'd, so here it would be of use to draw up one of sins committed. And doubtless he that confronts the one with the other, cannot but be astonished to find them both so numerous, equally wondring at Gods mercy in continuing his blessings, in despite of all his provocations, and at his own baseness in continuing his provocations, in despite of all those blessings. Indeed 'tis nothing but our affected ignorance of our own demerits, that makes it possible for us to repine under the severest of Gods dispensations. Would  
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we but ransack our hearts, and see all the abominations that lie there, nay would the most of us but recollect those barefac'd crimes w<sup>ch</sup> even the world can witness against us, we should find more then enough to balance the heaviest of our pressures. When therefore by our impatient strugglings we fret and gall our selves under our burdens, let us interrogate our souls in the words of the Prophet, *Why doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sin?* Let us not spend our breath in murmurs and out-cries, which will only serve to provoke more stripes: but *let us search and try our waies, and turn again to the Lord*, Lam. 3. 39. diligently seek out *that accursed thing* which has caused our discomfeiture, Jos. 18. and by the removal of that, prepare the way for the access of mercy. But alas how preposterous a method do we take in our afflictions? We accuse every thing but what we ought, furiously fly at all the second causes of our calamity, nay too often at the first by impious disputes of providence, and in the mean time, as *Job* speaks, *the root of the matter is found in us*, Job. 19. 28. We shelter and protect in our bosoms the real Author of our miseries



ries. The true way then to allay the sense of our sufferings, is to sharpen that of our sins. The prodigal thought the meanest condition in his fathers family a preferment, *Make me one of thy hired servants:* Luk. 15. 19. And if we have his penitence, we shall have his submission also, and calmly attend Gods disposals of us.

6. As every man in his afflictions is to look inward on his own heart, so also upward and consider by whose providence all events are order'd. *Is there any evil (i. e. of punishment) in the city, and the Lord hath not don it?* Am. 3. 6. and what are we worms that we should dispute with him? Shall a man contend with his Maker? Let the *pot/berd strive with the pot/berds of the earth*, Isa. 45. 9. And as his power is not to be controll'd, so neither is his justice to be impeach'd. *Shall not the judg of all the earth do right?* Gen. 18. 25. And where we can neither resist nor appeal, what have we to do but humbly to submit? Nor are we only compell'd to it by necessity, but induced and invited by interest, since his dispensations are directed not barely to assert his dominion, but to evidence his paternal care over us. He discerns our needs, and accordingly applies

plies to us. The benignity of his nature permits him not to take delight in our distresses, *he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men*, Lam. 3. 33. and therefore when ever he administers to us a bitter cup, we may be sure the ingredients are medicinal, and such as our infirmities require. He dares not trust our intemperate appetites with unmixt prosperities, the lushiousness whereof tho it may please our palats, yet like St. *Johns* book, Rev. 10. 9. that *bony in the mouth may prove gall in the bowels*, ingender the most fatal diseases. Let us therefore in our calamities *not consult with flesh and blood*, Gal. 1. 16 (which the more it is bemoan'd, the more it complains) but look to the hand that strikes; and assure our selves, that the stripes are not more severe, then he sees necessary in order to our good: and since they are so, they ought in reason to be our choices as well as his; and not only Religion, but self-love will prompt us to say, with old *Ely*, *it is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good*. 1 Sam. 3. 11. But alas we do not understand what is our interest; because we do not rightly understand what we are our selves. We consider our selves merely in our animal

mal being, our bodies and those sensitive faculties vested in them; and when we are invaded there, we think we are undone; tho that breach be made only to relieve that diviner part within us, besieged and oppressed with the flesh about it (for so God knows it too often is;) or if we do not consider it in that notion of an enemy, yet at the utmost estimate, the body is to the soul but as the garment to the body, a decent case to cover: now what man (not stark frantic) would not rather have his clothes cut than his flesh? and then by the rate of proportion, we may well question our own sobriety, when we repine that our souls are secur'd at the cost of our bodies; and that is certainly the worst, the unkindest design, that God has upon us; and our impatient resistances serve only to frustrate the kind, and medicinal part of afflictions, but will not at all rescue us from the severe: Our murmurings may ruine our souls, but will never avert any of our outward calamities.

7. A seventh help to contentment is to have a right estimate of the world, & the common state of humanity: to consider the world but as a stage and our selves but as actors, and to resolve that it is very lit-

tle material what part we play so we do it well. A Comedian may get as much applause by acting the slave as the conqueror, and he that acts the one to day, may to morrow reverse the part, & personate the other. So great are the vicissitudes of the world, that there is no building any firm hopes upon it. All the certainty we have of it, is, that in every condition it has its uneasinesses: so that when we court a change, we rather seek to vary then end our miseries. And certainly he that has well imprest upon his mind the vanity & vexation of the world, cannot be much surpris'd at any thing that befalls him in it. We expect no more of any thing but to do its kind, and we may as well be angry that we cannot bring the lions to our cribs, or fix the wind to a certain point, as that we cannot secure ourselves from dangers and disappointments in this rough and mutable world. We are therefore to lay it as an infallible maxim, that in this vale of tears every man must meet with sorrows and disasters: and then sure we may take our peculiar with evenness of temper, as being but the natural consequent of our being men. And tho possibly we may every one think himself to  
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have a double portion, yet that is usually from the deceitful comparison we make of our selves with others. We take the magnifying glasses of discontent and envy when we view our own miseries & others felicities, but look on our enjoiments and their sufferings thro the contracting optics of ingratitude and incompassion: and whilst we do thus, 'tis impossible but we must foment our own dissatisfactions. He that will compare to good purpose, must do it honestly and sincerely, and view his neighbors calamities with the same attention he do's his own, and his own comforts with the same he do's his neighbors; and then many of the great seeming inequalities would come pretty neer a level.

8. But even where they do not, it in the 8<sup>th</sup> place deserves however to be consider'd how ill natur'd a thing it is, for any man to think himself more miserable because another is happy: and yet this is the very thing, by which alone many men have made themselves wretched: for many have created wants, merely from the envious contemplation of other mens abundance. And indeed there is nothing more disingenuous, or (go to higher) more

Diabolical. *Lucifer* was happy enough in his original state, yet could not think himself so because he was *not like the most high* Isa. 14. 14. And when by that insolent ambition he had forfeited bliss, it has ever since bin an aggravation of his torment, that mankind is assumed to a capacity of it; and accordingly he makes it the design of his envious industry to defeat him. Now how perfectly are the two first parts of this copy transcrib'd, by those who first cannot be satisfied with any inferior degree of prosperity, and then when their impatiencies with other mens enjoyments of what they cannot attain? And 'tis much to be doubted, that they who go thus far may compleat the parallel, and endeavor when they have opportunity to undermine that happiness they envy. Therefore since Satan is so apt to impress his whole image, where he has drawn any of his lineaments, it concerns us warily to guard ourselves, and by a Christian sympathy with our Brethren, *rejoice with them that do rejoice*, Rom. 12. 15. make the comforts of others an allay, not an improvement of our own miseries. Charity has a strange magnetic power, and attracts the concerns of our brethren to us,  
and

and he that has that in his breast can never want refreshment, whilst any about him are happy; for by adopting their interest, he shares in their joys. *Jethro* tho an alien rejoiced for all the good God had don to Israel, *Exod.* 18, 9. and why should not we have as sensible a concurrence with our fellow Christians? And he that has so, will still find something to balance his own suffering.

9. LET him that aspires to contentment set bounds to his desire. 'Tis our common fault in this affair, we usually begin at the wrong end, we *enlarge our desires as hell, and cannot be satisfied.* *Hab.* 2. 5. and then think God uses us ill, if he do not fill our insatiable appetites: whereas if we would confine our expectations to those things which we need, or he has promis'd, there are few of us who would not find them abundantly answer'd. Alas how few things are there which our nature (if not stimulated by fancy and luxury) requires? And how rare is it to find them who want those? Nay who have not many additionals for delight & pleasure? And yet Gods promise under the Gospel extends only to those necessaries: for where *Christ* assures his disciples that *these things shall be*

*be added unto them*, Mat. 6. 33. the context apparently restrains *these things* to meat and drink and clothing. Therefore take *no thought for the life what you shall eat, or what you shall drink, nor yet for the body what you shall put on*, verse 25. now what pretence have we to claim more then our Charter gives us? God never articted with the ambitious to give him honors, or with the covetous to fill his bags, or with the voluptuous to feed his luxuries. Let us therefore, if we expect to be satisfied, modestly confine our desires within the limits he has set us: and then every accession which he superadds will appear (what it is) a largess and bounty. But whilst our appetites are boundless, & rather stretcht then filled with our acquests, what possibility is there of their satisfaction: And when we importune God for it, we do but assign him such a task the Poets made a representation of their Hell, the filling a sieve with water, or the rolling a stone up a precipice.

10<sup>th</sup> A great expedient for contentment, is to confine our thoughts to the present, and not to let them loose to future events. Would we but do this, we might shake off a great part of our burden:



den; for we often heap fantastic loads upon our selves by anxious presages of things which perhaps will never happen, and yet sink more under them, then under the real weight that is actual upon us. and this is certainly one of the greatest follies imaginable: for either the evil will come or it will not: if it will, 'tis sure no such desirable guest that we should go out to meet it, we shall feel it time enough when it falls on us, we need not project to anticipate our sense of it: but if it will not, what extreme madness is it for a man to torment himself with that which will never be, to create engines of tortures, and by such aerial afflictions, make himself as miserable as the most real ones could do? And truly this is all that we usually get by our fore-sights. Prevision is one of Gods attributes, and he mocks at all our pretences to it, by a frequent defeating of all our fore-casts. He do's it often in our hopes: some little cross circumstance many times demolishes those goodly machins we raise to our selves: and he do's it no less in our fears: those ills we solemnly expected often baulk us, and others from an unexpected coast suddenly invade us. And since we are so blind, so short-sighted,  
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let us never take upon us to be scouts, to discover danger at a distance (for 'tis manifold odds we shall only bring home false alarms) but let us rest our selves upon that most admirable Aphorism of our blessed Lord, *Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof*, Mat. 6. 34. apply our selves with Christian courage to bear the present, and leave God either to augment or diminish, as he sees fit, for the future. Or if we will needs be looking forward, let it be in obedience not contradiction to our duty: let us entertain our selves with those futurities which we are sure are not Chime-ra's, death and judgment, heaven and hell. The nearer we draw these things to our view, the more insensible will all inter-medial objects be; they will deceive our sense of present, and much more forestall the apprehension of future evils: for 'tis our neglect of things eternal, that leaves us thus at leisure for the transitory.

II. IN the last place let us in all our distresses supersede our anxieties and sollicitudes by that most effectual remedy the Apostle prescribes, *Is any man afflicted, let him pray*, Jam. 5. 14. And this sure is a most rational prescription: for alas what else can we do towards the redress  
of

of our griefs. We who are so impotent, that we have not power over the most despicable excrescence of our own body, cannot make *one hair white or black*, Mat. 5. 36. what can we do towards the new moulding our condition, or modelling things without us? Our sollicitudes serve only to bind our burdens faster upon us, but this expedient of Praier will certainly relieve us. *Call upon me*, saies God, *in the time of trouble, and I will hear thee, and thou shalt praise me*, Psal. 50. 15. Whenever therefore we are sinking in the floods of affliction, let us thus support our selves by representing our wants unto our gracious Lord, cry unto him as St. Peter did, Mat. 14. 30. and he will *take us by the hand, and be the winds never so boisterous or contrary*, preserve from sinking; the waves or billows of this troublesom world, will serve but to tosse us closer into his arms, who can with a word appease the roughest tempest, or rescue from it. O let us not then be so unkind to our selves, as to neglect this infallible means of our deliverance! but with the Psalmist take our refuge under the *shadow of the divine wings till the calamity be over-past*. Psa. 57. 1. And as this is a sure expedient in

all our real important afflictions, so is it a good test by which to try what are so. We are often peevish and disquieted at trifles, nay we take up the quarrels of our lusts and vice, and are discontented when they want their wisht supplies. Now in either of these cases, no man that at all consider who he praies to, will dare to insert these in his praiers, it being a contempt of God to invoke him in things so slight as the one, or impious as the other. It will therefore be good for every man when he goes to address for relief, to consider what of his pressures they are, that are worthy of that solemn deprecation: and when he has singled those out, let him reflect, and he will find he has in that prejudg'd all his other discontents as frivolous or wicked. And then sure he cannot think fit to harbour them, but must for shame dismiss them, since they are such, as he dare not avow to him, from whom alone he can expect relief. God alwaies pities our real miseries, but our imaginary ones dare not demand it. Let us not then create such diseases to our selves, as we cannot declare to our Physitian: and when those are precluded, for all the rest St.

*Paul*

*Pauls recipe is a Catholicon, Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayers and supplications, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. Phil. 4. 6.*

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## S E C T.    X I.

*Of Resignation.*

I. **A**ND now amidst such variety of receipts, 'twill be hard to instance any one sort of calamity which can escape their efficacy, if they be but duly appli'd. But indeed we have generally a compendious way of frustrating all remedies by never making use of them : like fantastic patients we are well enough content to have our disease discours'd, and medicines prescrib'd, but when the Physic comes, have still some pretence or other to protract the taking it. But I shall beseech the Reader to consider, that counsels are not charms, to work without any cooperation of the concern'd person : they must be adverted to, they must be ponder'd and consider'd, and finally they must be practis'd, or else the utmost good they can do us, is to give us a few hours divertisement in the reading, but they do us a mischief that infinitely out-weighs it, for they im-  
prove

prove our guilts by the ineffective tender they make of rescuing us from them, and leave us accountable not only for the original crimes, but for our obstinate adhesion to them in spite of admonition.

2. I say this because it is a little too notorious, that many take up books only as they do cards or dice, as an instrument of diversion. 'Tis a good entertainment of their curiosity to see what can be said upon any subject, and be it well or ill handled, they can please themselves equally with the ingenuity or ridiculousness of the composition, and when they have don this, they have don all they design'd. This indeed may be tolerable in Romances and Play-books, but sure it ill befits Divinity. And yet I fear it oftneft happens there: for in the former some do project for some trivial improvements, as the embellishing of their stile; the inspiring of their fancies; and some men would scarce be able to drive their pedling trade of wit, did they not thus sweep the stage: but alas how many books of piety are read, of which one cannot discern the least tincture in mens conversations, which sure do's in a great measure proceed from the want of a determinate design in  
their

their reading, mens practice being not apt to be less rovers then their speculation. He that takes a practical subject in hand, must do it with a design to conform his practice to what he shall there be convinc'd to be his duty, and he that comes not with this probity of mind, is not like to be much benefited by his reading.

3. B u t one would think this should be an unnecessary caution at this time, for since the intent of this tract, is only to shew men the way to contentment, 'tis to be suppos'd the Readers will be as much in earnest as the writer can be, it being every mans proper and most important interest, the instating him in the highest and most supreme felicity that this world can admit: yet for all this fair probability, I doubt many will in this instance have the same indifference they have in their other spiritual concerns.

4. T H I S true indeed that a querulous repining humor, is one of the most pernicious, the most ugly habits incident to mankind; but yet as deformed people are oft the most in love with themselves, so this crooked piece of our temper is of all others the most indulgent to it self. Melan-



lancholy is the most stubborn and untractable of all humors; and discontent being the offspring of that, partakes of that inflexibility: and accordingly we see how impregnable it often is, against all assaults of reason and religion too. *Jonah* in a fullen mood would justify his discontent even to God himself, and in spite of that calm reproof, *dost thou well to be angry?* *Jon. 4. 9. aver he did well to be angry even to the death.* And do we not frequently see men upon an impatience of some disappointment, grow angry even at their comforts? Their friends, their children, their meat, their drink, every thing grows nauseous to them, and in a frantic discontent, they often fling away those things which they most value. Besides, this peevish impatience is of so aerial a diet, that 'tis scarce possible to starve it. 'Twill nourish it self with Phantasms and Chimeras, suborn a thousand surmises & imaginary distresses to abet its pretences: and tho every one of us can remonstrate to another, the unreasonableness of this discontent; yet scarce any of us will draw the argument home, or suffer our selves to be convinc'd by what we urge as irrefragable to others. Nay farther this humor is impatient of  
any

any diversion, loves to converse only with it self. In bodily pains, men that despair of cure are yet glad of alliaies & mitigations, and strive by all arts, to divert and deceive the sense of their anguish; but in this disease of the mind, men cherish and improve their torment, roll and chew the bitter pill in their mouths, that they may be sure to have its utmost flavor; and by devoting all their thoughts to the subject of their grief, keep up an uninterrupted sense of it: as if they had the same Tyranny for themselves which *Caligula* had for others, and loved to feel themselves die. Indeed there is not a more absurd contradiction in the world, then to hear men cry out of the weight, the intolerableness of their burden, and yet grasp it as fast as if their life were bound up in it: will not deposite it, no not for the smallest breathing time. A strange fascination sure, and yet so frequent, that it ought to be the fundamental care of him that would cure men of their discontents, to bring them to a hearty willingness of being cured.

5. It may be this will look like paradox, and every man will be apt to say he wishes nothing more in earnest, then to be  
be

be cured of his present discontent. He that is poor would be cured by wealth, he that is low and obscure by honor and greatness: but so an Hydropic person may say he desires to have his thirst cur'd by a perpetual supply of drink: yet all sober people know, that that is the way only to increase it: but let the whole habit of the body be rectified, and then the thirst will cease of it self. And certainly 'tis the very same in the present case: no outward accessions will ever satisfy our cravings, our appetites must be tam'd and reduc'd, and then they will never be able to raise tumults, or put us into mutiny and discontent: and he (and none but he) that submits to this method, can truly be said to desire a cure.

6. BUT he that thus attests the reality of his desires, and seeks contentment in its proper sphere, may surely arrive to some considerable degrees of it. We find in all ages men, that only by the direction of natural light have calmed their disquiets, and reason'd themselves into contentment even under great and sensible pressures; men who amidst the acutest torments, have still preserv'd a serenity of mind, and have frustrated con-

tempts & reproches by disregarding them; and sure we give a very ill account of our Christianity, if we cannot do as much with it, as they did without it.

7. I do not here propose such a Stoical insensibility as makes no distinction of events, which, tho it has bin vainly pretended to by many, yet sure was never attain'd by any upon the strength of discourse. Some natural dulnesse or casual stupefaction must concur to that, and perhaps by doing so, has had the luck to be canoniz'd for vertue. I mean only such a superiority of mind as raises us above our sufferings, tho it exemt us not from the sense of them. We cannot purpose to our selves a higher patern in any vertue then our blessed Lord : yet we see he not only felt that load under which he lay, but had the most pungent and quick sense of it, such as prompted those earnest deprecations, *Father if it be possible let thus cup pass* : yet all those displacencies of his flesh were surmounted by the resignation of his spirit, *nevertheless not what I will but what thou wilt*, Luk. 22. And certainly he that in imitation of this patern, do's in spight of all the reluctancies of his sense, thus entirely submit his will, how-

however he may be sad, yet he is not impatient; nor is he like to be sad long, for to him that is thus resign'd, *light will spring up*; Psal. 97. 11. some good Angel will be sent like that to our Savior to relieve his disconsolation. God will send either some outward allaiies, or give such interior comforts and supports, as shall counterpoise those afflictions he takes not off.

8. INDEED the grand design of God in correcting us is (the same with that of a prudent parent towards his child) to break our wills. That stubborn faculty will scarce bend with easy touches, and therefore do's require some force: and when by that rougher handling, he has brought it to a pliantness, the work is don. 'Tis therefore our interest to cooperate with this design, to assist as much as we are able towards the subjugating this unruly part of our selves. This is that *Sheba* 2 Sam. 20. the surrendring of whom is Gods expectation in all the close sieges he laies to us. Let us then be so wise, as by an early resigning it to divert his farther hostilities, and buy our peace with him.

2. AND truly this is the way not only to gain peace with him, but our selves

too: 'tis the usurpation of our will over our reason which breeds all the confusion and tumults within our own breasts, and there is no possibility of curbing its insolence, but by putting it into safe custody, committing it to him who (as our Church teaches us) alone can order the unruly wills of sinful men. Indeed nothing but experience can fully inform us of the serenity and calm of that soul, who has resign'd his will to God. All care of chusing for himself is happily superseded, he is tempted to no anxious forecasts for future events, for he knows nothing can happen in contradiction of that supreme will, in which he hath sanctuary: which will certainly chuse for him with that tenderness and regard, that a faithful Guardian would for his pupil: an indulgent father for his child that casts its self into his arms. Certainly there is not in the world such a holy sort of artifice, so Divine a charm to ty our God to us, as this of resigning our selves to him. We find the Gibeonites by yielding themselves vassals to the Israelites, had their whole army at their beck to rescue them in their danger *Jos. 10. 6.* and can we think God is less considerate of his homagers and dependents?

No

No certainly, his honor as well as his compassion is concern'd in the relief of those who have surrendred themselves to him.

IO. FARTHER yet, when by resignation we have united our wills to God, we have quite changed the scene, and we who when our wills stood single were liable to perpetual defeats, in this blessed combination can never be crost. When our will is twisted and involved with Gods, the same omnipotence which backs his will, do's also attend ours. Gods will, we are sure, admits of no controule, can never be resisted, and we have the same security for ours, so long as it concurs with it. By this means all calamities are unsting'd, and even those things which are most repugnant to our sensitive natures, are yet very agreeable to our spirits, when we consider they are implicitly our own choice, since they are certainly his, whom we have deputed to elect for us. Indeed there can be no face of adversity so averting and formidable, which set in this light will not look amiable. We see daily how many uneasinesses and prejudices men will contentedly suffer in pursuit of their wills: and if we have really espoused Gods, made his will ours, we shall  
with

with as great (nay far greater) alacrity embrace its distributions, how uneasy soever to our sense; our souls will more acquiesce in the accomplishment of the Divine will, then our flesh can reluct to any severe effects of it.

11. HERE then is that footing of firm ground, on which whosoever can stand, may indeed do that which *Archimedes* boasted, move the whole world. He may as to himself subvert the whole course of sublunary things, unvenem all those calamities which are to others the gall of Asps; and in a farther sense verify that Evangelical prophecy, of *beating swords into plough-shares, and spears into pruning hooks*, Esay. 2. 4. the most hostile weapons, the most adverse events, shall be by him converted into instruments of fertility, shall only advance his spiritual growth.

12. AND now who can chuse but confess this a much more eligible state, then to be alwaies harrassed with sollicitudes and cares, perpetually either fearing future defeats, or bewailing the past. And then what can we call it less then madness or enchantment, for men to act so contrary to their own dictates, yea to  
their



their very sense and experience, to see and acknowledge the inexplicable felicity of a resigned will, and yet perversely to hold out theirs, tho they can get nothing by it, but the sullen pleasure of opposing God, and tormenting themselves? Let us therefore if not for our duty or ease, yet at least for our reputation, the asserting our selves men of sobriety and common sense, do that which upon all these interests we are obliged; let us but give up our wills, and with them we shall certainly divest our selves of all our fruitless anxieties, & cast our burdens upon him who invites us to do so. He who bears all our sins, will bear all our sorrows, our griefs too: if we will but be content to deposite them, he will relieve us from all those oppressing weights, which make *our souls cleave to the dust*, Psal. 119. 25. and will in exchange give us only his *light*, *his pleasant burden*, Mat. 12. 33. In a word there will be no care left for us, but that of keeping our selves in a capacity of his: let us but secure our love to him, and we are ascertain'd that *all things shall work together for our good*, Rom. 8. 28.

To conclude, Resignation and Contentment are vertues not only of a near  
cogna-

cognition and resemblance but they are linked as the Cause and the Effect. Let us but make sure of Resignation, and Content will flow into us without our farther industry: as on the contrary whilst our wills are at defiance with Gods, we shall alwaies find things at as great defiance with ours. All our subtilties or industries will never mould them to our satisfactions, till we have moulded our selves into that plaint temper that we can cordially say, *It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.* 1 Sam. 3. 18.

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The Close.

1. **T**HIS short institution of the *Art of Contentment*, cannot more naturally, or more desirably draw to a conclusion, then in the resort we have given it, in the bosome of divine *Providence*. The Roman conquerors as the last pitch of all their triumphs, went to the Capitol, and laid their Garlands in the lap of *Jupiter*: but the Christian has an easier way to Triumph, to put his crown of thornes (for that is the trophy of his victories) within the arms of his gracious God; there lodg his fears, his wants, his sorrows, and himself too, as in the best repository.

2. THE Gospel command of *not caring for the morrow*, Mat. 6. 34. and being *careful for nothing*, Phil. 4. 6. nakedly propos'd, might seem the abandoning of us to all the calamities of life: but when we are directed to *cast all our care* upon a gracious and all powerful Parent, and are assur'd that *he cares for us*, 1 Pet. 5. 7. that *tho a woman may forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion*

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*of the son of her womb, yet will he not forget his children, Isa. 49. 15.* this will abundantly supersede all cavil and objection. Whilst worldly men trust in an arm of flesh, lay up *treasure on earth*, a prey for *rust and moth*, Mat. 6. 19. and a *torment* to themselves, Jam. 5. 3. the Christian has Omnipotence for his support, and a *treasure in heaven*, where no thief approaches, nor moth corrupts, Mat. 6. 20. Whilst bold inquirers call in question Gods secret will, oblige him to their sub or supralapsarian schemes, their absolute or conditional decrees, their grace foreseen or predetermin'd; the pious man with awful acquiescence submits to that which is reveal'd: resolves for ever to obey, but never to dispute: as knowing that the belov'd Disciple lean'd on his Masters bosom; but 'tis the thieves and traitors part to go about to rifle it.

3. 'Tis surely a modest demand in the behalf of God Almighty, that we should allow him as much privilege in his World, as every Peasant claimes in his Cottage; to be Master there, and dispose of his household as he thinks best; to *say to this man, Go, and he goeth: and to another, Come, and he cometh: and to his servant, Do this, and*

and he doth it, Mat. 8. 9. And if we would afford him this liberty, there would be an immediate end put to all clamor and complaint.

4. WE make it our daily praier that the *will* of God *may be don in earth as it is in heaven*, with a ready, swift, and uninterrupted constancy. As 'tis Giant-like rebellion to set up our will against his, so is it mad perverseness to set it up against our own; be displeas'd that our requests are granted, and repine that his, and therewith our will is don. It were indeed not only good manners, but good policy, to observe the direction of the Heathen, and *follow God*, not prejudg his determination by ours; but in a modest suspension of our thoughts, *hearken what the Lord God will say concerning us, for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his Saints that they turn not again*, Psal. 115. 8.

5. OR however upon surprise we may indulge to a passionate affection, and dote upon our illegitimate off-spring, our darling guilts or follies, as *David* did upon that Child, who was the price of Murder and adultery: yet when the brat is taken from us; when the *Child is dead*, it will

become us to do as he did, rise from our sullen posture on the earth, and *worship in the house of the Lord*, 2 Sam. 12. 20. It will behove us, as he saies in another place, to *lay our hand upon our mouth*, because it was his doing, Psal. 30. 10. and with holy *Job* Chap. 40. 4. when charg'd with his murmurings, *Behold I am vile, what shall I answer? Once have I spoken, but I will not answer: yea twice, but I will proceed no farther.*

6. *Socrates* rightly said of Contentment, opposing it to the riches of fortune and opinion, that 'tis the wealth of nature, for it gives every thing that we have learnt to want, and really need: but Resignation is the riches of Grace, bestowing all things that a Christian not only needs, but can desire, even Almighty God himself. He indeed, as the Scholemen teach, is the objective happiness of the Creature; He who is the fountain of being, must be also of blessedness: and tho this be only communicable to us, when we have put off that *flesh which cannot enter into the kingdom of God*, and laid aside that *corruption* which cannot *inherit incorruption*, 1. Cor. 15. yet even in this life, we may make approaches to that blessed

sed state, by acts of Resignation and denial of our selves. It was the generous saying of *Socrates* being about to die unto his friend; O *Crito*, since it is the will of God, so let it be: *Anytus* and *Melitus* may kill me, but cannot hurt me. But such a resignation as 'tis infinitely a greater duty to a Christian, so it is also a more firm security. In that case 'tis not the *Martyr*, but *Jesus* of *Nazareth* who is thus persecuted, and he who attacks him will find it hard to prick against the pricks, Act. 9. 5.

7. THERE could not be a greater instance of the profligate sensuality of the *Israelites*, then that they murmured for want of *leeks and onions*, Numb. 11. 5. when they are Angels food, and had bread rain'd down from heaven. 'Tis impossible for the soul that is sensible of God Almightyes favor, to repine at any earthly pressure. *The Lord is my shepherd*, saith *David*, therefore can I lack nothing, Psal. 23. 1. And, thou hast put gladness into my heart, more then when their corn, and wine, and oil increased, Psal. 4. 7. & in passionate rapture he cries out, Ps. 73. 25. *Whom have I in heaven but thee: and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of thee?*  
my

*my flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. And likewise Psal. 46. 1. God is our hope and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, tho the earth be moved: and tho the hills be carried into the midst of the sea. Tho the waters thereof rage and swell, and tho the mountains shake at the tempest of the same. If God be in the midst of us, we shall not be removed, he will help us, and that right early. Let us therefore possess our selves of this support, and as the Prophet advises Isa. 8. 12. neither fear, nor be afraid, in any exigence how great soever; but be still and quiet, and sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, and let him be our fear, and let him be our dread.*

FINIS.



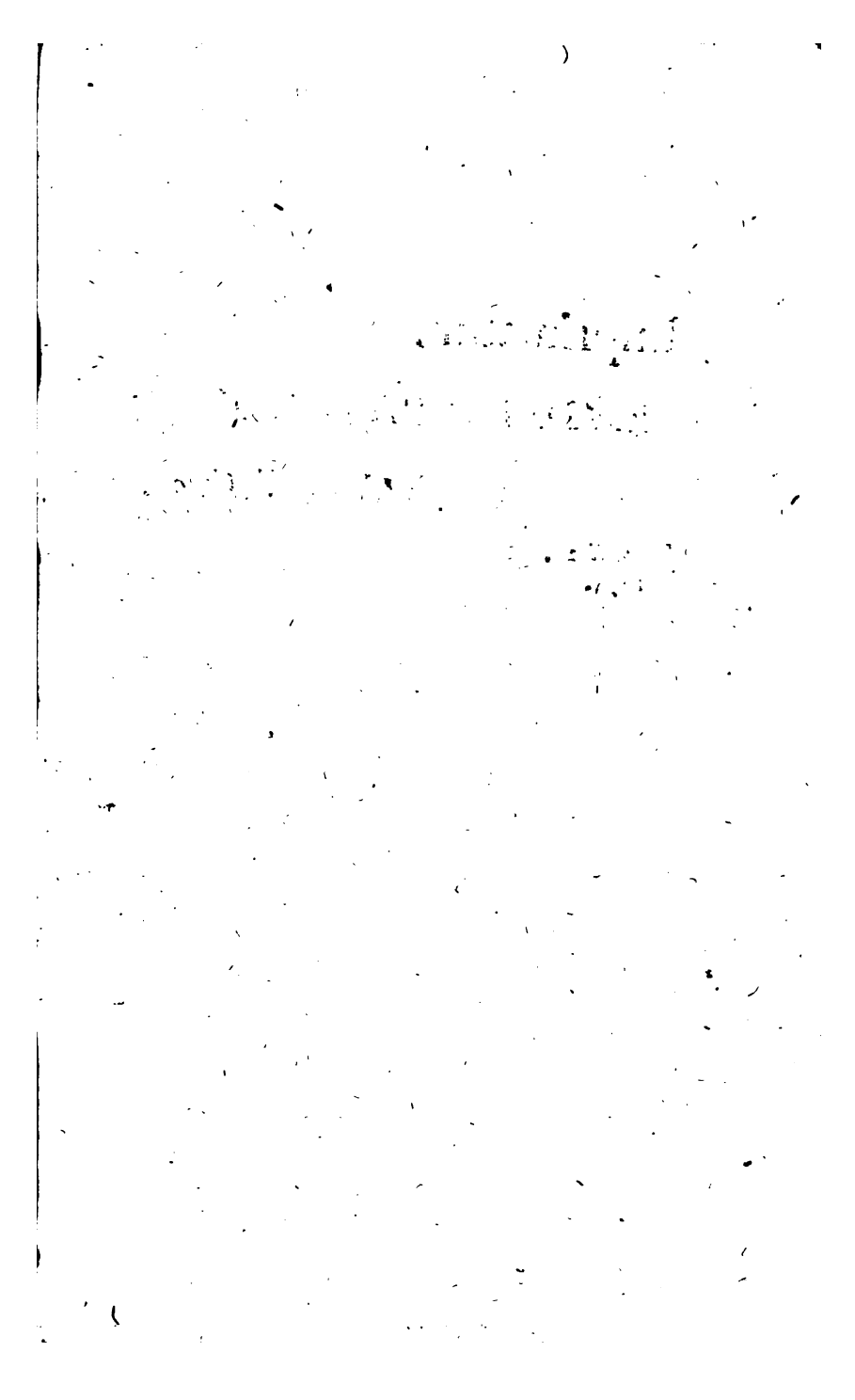
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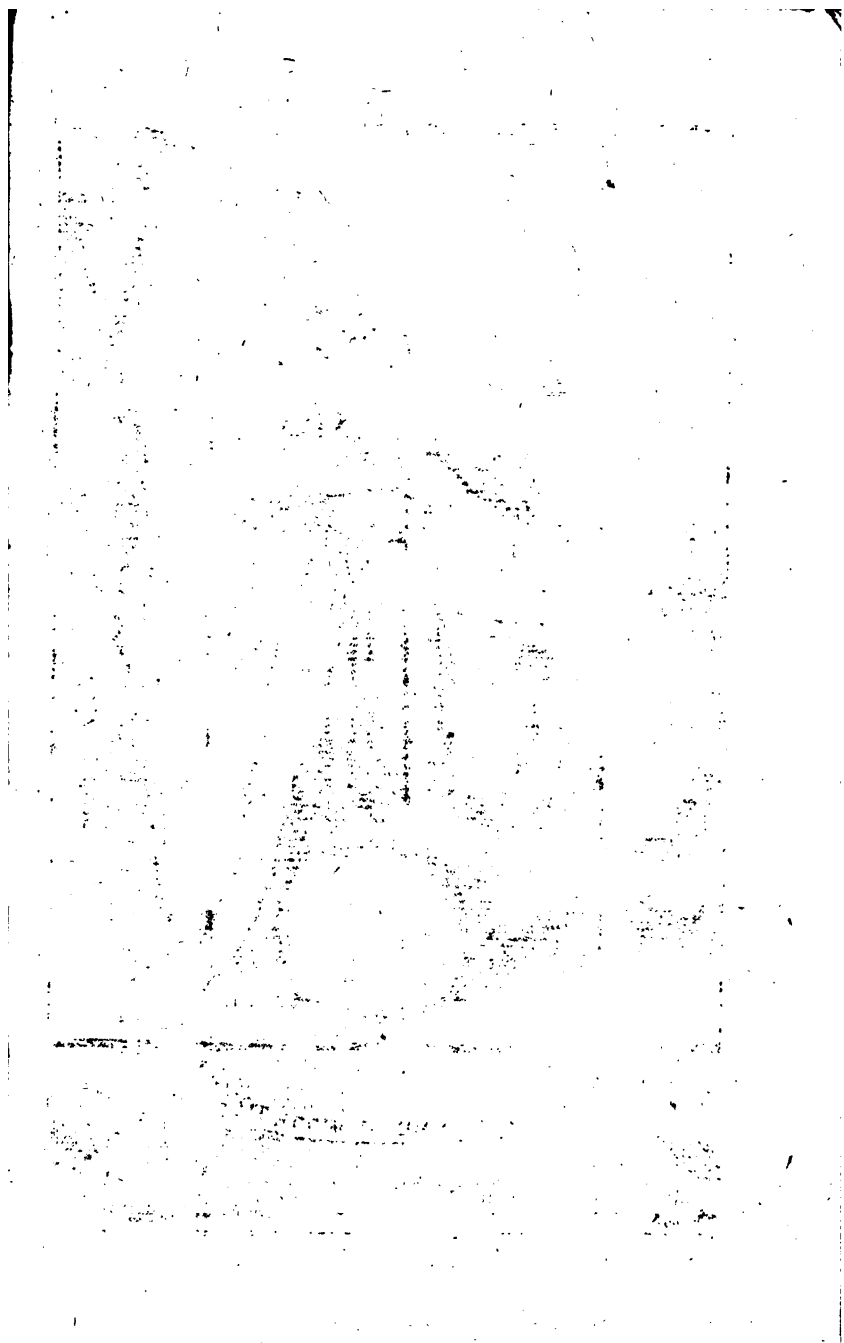


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**Januarii 24.**  
**1675.**





THE  
Government  
OF THE  
TONGUE

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By the Author of  
THE WHOLE DUTY OF MAN, &c.

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*Death and Life are in the power of the  
Tongue; Prov. 18. 21.*

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The fourth Impression.

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At the THEATER in OXFORD,

M. DC. LXXV.

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# THE PREFACE.

**T**HE Government of the Tongue has ever bin justly reputed one of the most important parts of human Regiment. The Philosopher and the Divine equally attest this ; and Solomon ( who was both ) gives his suffrage also ; the perswasions to, & encomiums of it taking up a considerable part of his book of Proverbs. I shall not therefore need to say any  
a 2 thing,

## The Preface.

thing, to justify my choice of this subject, which has so much better Authorities to commend it: I rather wish that it had not the super-addition of an accidental fitness grounded upon the universal neglect of it, it now seeming to be an art wholly out-dated. For tho some lineaments of it may be met with in books, yet there is scarce any foot-steps of it in practice, where alone it can be significant. The attempt therefore of reviving it I am sure is seasonable, I wish it were half as easy.

2. Indeed that skill was never very easy, it requiring the greatest vigilance and caution, and therefore not to be attain'd by loose trifling spirits. The Tongue is so slippery, that

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## The Preface.

*it easy deceives a drowsy or heedless guard. Nature seems to have given it some unhappy advantage towards that. 'Tis in its frame the most ready for motion of any member, needs not so much as the flexure of a joint, and by access of humors acquires a glibness too, the more to facilitate its moving. And alas we too much find the effect of this its easy frame: it often goes without giving us warning; and as children when they happen upon a rolling engine, can set it in such a carriere, as wiser people cannot on a sudden stop; so the childish parts of us, our passions, our fancies, all our mere animal faculties, can thrust our tongues into such disorders, as our reason cannot easily rectify. The due managery therefore of this unruly member,*

## The Preface.

*member, may rightly be esteemed one of the greatest mysteries of Wisdom and Vertue. This is intimated by St. James, If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body, Ja. 3. 2. 'Tis storied of Bembo a primitive Christian, that coming to a friend to teach him a Psalm, he began to him the thirty ninth, I said I will look to my waies, that I offend not with my Tongue; upon hearing of which first verse, he stopt his Tutor, saying, This is enough for me, if I learn it as I ought; and being after six months rebuk'd for not coming again, he replied, that he had not yet learnt his first lesson: nay after nineteen years he profess'd, that in that time he had scarce learnt to fulfil*

## The Preface.

fil that one line. I give not this instance to discourage, but rather to quicken men to the study, for a lesson that requires so much time to learn, had need be early begun with.

3. But especially in this age, wherein the contrary liberty has got such a prepossession, that men look on it as a part of their birth-right, nay do not only let their tongues loose, but studiously suggest inordinancies to them, and use the spur where they should the bridle. By this means conversation is so generally corrupted, that many have had cause to wish they had not bin made sociable creatures. A man secluded from company can have but the Devil and himself to tempt him, but he that converses, has almost as many snares as he has  
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## The Preface.

companions. Men barter wices, and as if each had not enough of his own growth, transplant out of his neighbors soil, and that which was intended to cultivate and civilize the world, has turned it into a wild desert and wilderness.

4. This face of things, I confess looks not very promising to one who is to sollicite a reformation. But whatever the hopes are, I am sure the needs are great enough to justify the attempt. For as the disease is Epidemie, so it is mortal, also, utterly inconsistent with that pure religion, which leads to life. We may take St. James's word for it, If any man seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, that mans religion is vain, Jam. i. 26. God knows

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## The Preface.

*we have not much Religion among us: 'tis great pity we should frustrate the little we have, render that utterly insignificant, which at the best amounts to so little. Let therefore the difficulty and necessity of the task, prevail with us to take time before us, not to defer this so necessary a work till the night come; or imagine that the Tongue will be able to expiate its whole age of guilt by a feeble, Lord have mercy on me at the last. Tho indeed if that were supposable, 'twere but a broken reed to trust to, none knowing whether he shall have time or grace for that. He may be surpriz'd with an Oath, a Blasphemy, a Detraction in his mouth: many have bin so. 'Tis sure there must be a dying moment: and  
how*

## The Preface.

how can any man secure himself, it shall not be the same with that in which he utters those, and his expiring-breath, be so employed? Sure they cannot think that those incantations (tho hellish enough) can make them shot free, render them invulnerable to death's darts; and if they have not that or some other as ridiculous reserves, 'tis strange what should make them run such a mad adventure.

5. But I expect it should be objected, that this little despicable Tract is not proportionable to the encounter to which it is brought, that besides the unskilful managing of those points it do's touch, it wholly omits many proper to the subject, there being faults of the Tongue which it passes



## The Preface.

*passes in silence. I confess there is color enough for this objection. But I believe if it were put to votes, more would resolve I had said too much, rather than too little. Should I have enlarged to the utmost compass of this Theme, I should have made the volume of so affrighting a bulk, that few would have attempted it; and by saying much I should have said nothing at all to those who most need it. Mens stomachs are generally so queasie in these cases, that 'tis not safe to overload them. Let them try how they can digest this; if they can so as to turn it into kindly nourishment, they will be able to supply themselves with the remainder. For I think I may with some confidence affirm, that he that can confine his*  
*Tongue*

## The Preface

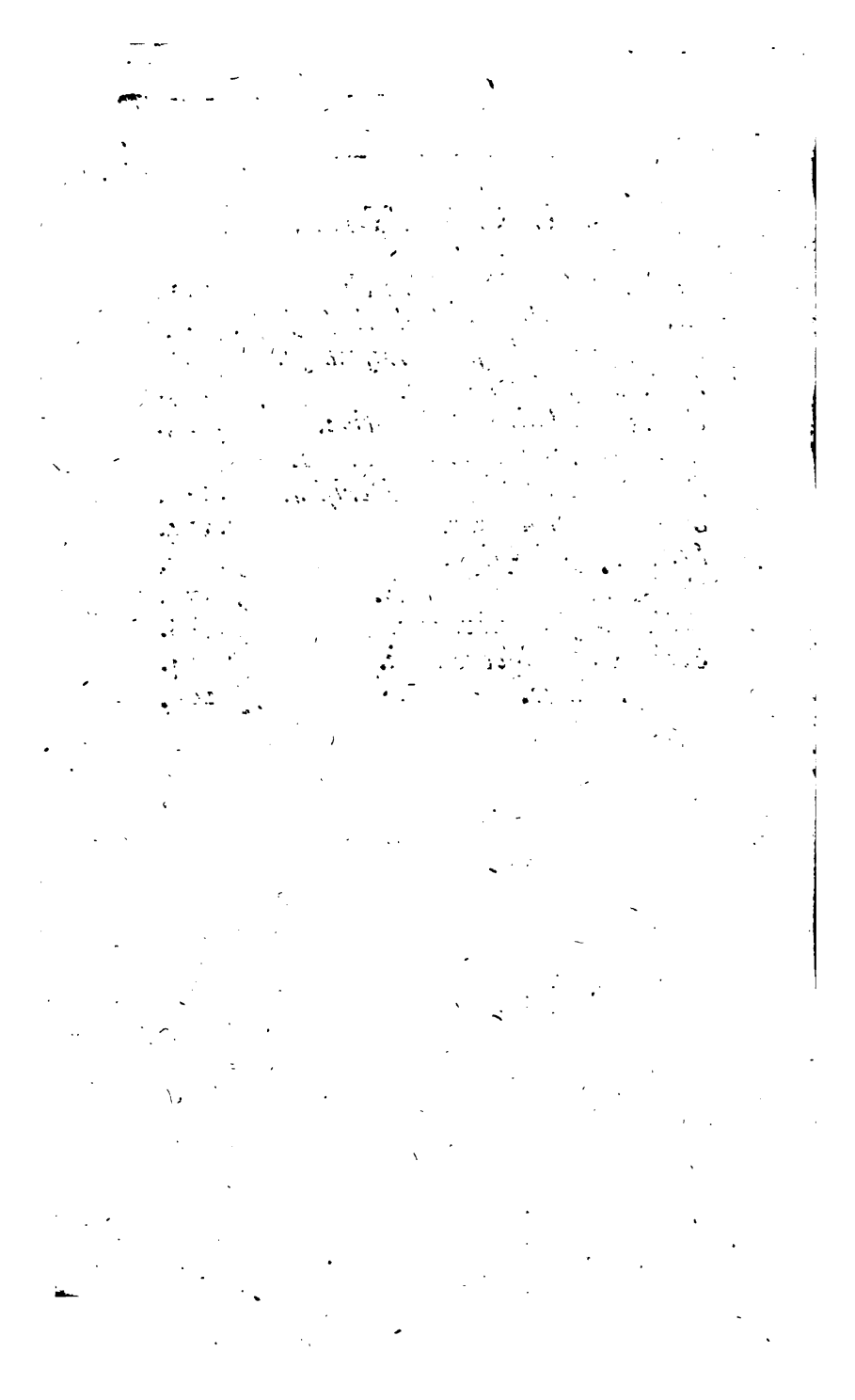
Tongue within the limits here pre-  
scrib'd, may without much difficulty re-  
strain its other excursions. All I shall  
beg of the Reader, is but to come with  
sincere intentions, and then perhaps  
these few Stones and Sling used in  
the name, and with invocation of the  
Lord of Hosts, may countervail the  
massive armor of the uncircumcised  
Philistin. And may that, God who  
loves to magnifie his power in weak-  
ness, give it the like success.

THE

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OF THE  
Government of the Tongue.

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SECT. I.

*Of the Use of Speech.*

I.  AN at his first creation was substituted by God as his Vicegerent, to receive the homage, and enjoy the services of all inferior beings: nay farther, was endowed with excellencies fit to maintain the port of so vast an Empire. Yet those very excellencies, as they qualified him for dominion, so they unfitted him

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## 2 The Government of the Tongue.

him for a satisfaction or acquiescence in those his vassals : the dignity of his nature set him above the society or converse of mere animals : so that in all the pomp of his royalty , amidst all the throng and variety of creatures , he still remain'd solitary. But God , who knew what an appetite of society he had implanted in him , judg'd this no agreeable state for him , *It is not meet that man should be alone.* Gen. 2. 18. And as in the universal frame of nature , he ingrafted such an abhorrence of vacuity , that all creatures do rather submit to a præternatural motion then admit it ; so , in this emty , this destitute condition of man , he relieved him by a miraculous expedient , divided him that he might unite him , and made one part of him an associate for the other.

2. NEITHER did God take this care to provide him a companion , merely for the intercourses of Sense : had that bin the sole aim , there needed no new productions , there were sensitive creatures enough : the design was to entertain his nobler principle , his reason , with a more equal converse , assign him an intimate , whose intellect as much corresponded with

with his, as did the outward form, whose heart, according to *Solomons* resemblance, answered his, *As in water face answers face.* Prov. 27. 19. with whom he might communicate minds, traffic and interchange all the notions and sentiments of a reasonable soul.

3. BUT tho there were this sympathy in their sublimer part which disposed them to the most intimate union; yet there was a cloud of flesh in the way which intercepted their mutual view, nay permitted no intelligence between them, other then by the mediation of some Organ equally commensurate to soul and body. And to this purpose the infinite wisdom of God ordained Speech; which as it is a sound resulting from the modulation of the Air, has most affinity to the spirit, but as it is uttered by the Tongue, has immediate cognation with the body, and so is the fittest instrument to manage a commerce between the rational yet invisible powers of human souls cloathed in flesh.

4. AND as we have reason to admire the excellency of this contrivance, so have we to applaud the extensiveness of the benefit. From this it is we derive all

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the advantages of society : without this men of the nearest neighborhood would have signified no more to each other then our *Antipodes* now do to us. All our arts and sciences for the accommodation of this life, had remain'd only a rude Chaos in their first matter, had not speech by a mutual comparing of notions rang-ed them into order. By this it is we can give one another notice of our wants, and sollicit relief; by this we interchangeably communicate advises, reproofs, consolations, all the necessary aids of human imbecillity. This is that which possesses us of the most valuable blessing of human life, I mean Friendship, which could no more have bin contracted amongst dumb men, then it can between pictures and statues. Nay farther to this we owe in a great degree the interests even of our spiritual being, all the oral, yea and written revelations too of Gods will; for had there bin no language there had bin no writing. And tho we must not pronounce how far God might have evidenced himself to mankind by immediate inspiration of every individual, yet we may safely rest in the Apostles inference Rom. 10. 14. *How shall they believe in him*



*him whom they have not heard, and how shall they hear without a preacher?*

5. FROM all these excellent uses of it in respect of man, we may collect another in relation to God, that is, the *praising* and *magnifying* his goodness, as for all other Effects of his bounty, so particularly that he hath given us language, and all the consequent advantages of it. This is the just inference of the son of *Syrach* *Ecclus. 51. 22. The Lord hath given me a tongue, and I will praise him therewith.* This is the sacrifice which God calls for so often by the Prophets, *the Calves of our lips*, which answers to all the oblations out of the herd, and which the Apostle makes equivalent to those of the *floor* and *winepress* also, *Heb. 13. 15. The fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name.* To this we frequently find the Psalmist exciting both himself and others, *Awake up my glory, I will give thanks unto thee, O Lord, among the people, and I will sing unto thee among the nations. Psal. 57. 9, 10.* And *O praise the Lord with me, and let us magnify his name together. Psal. 34. 3.* And indeed who ever observes that excellent magazine of Devotion, the book of Psalms, shall find that the *Lands* make up a very great part of it.

6. BY

6. By what hath bin said, we may define what are the grand uses of speech, viz. the Glorifying of God, and the benefiting of men. And this helps us to an infallible test by which to try our words. For since every thing is so far approvable as it answers the end of its being, what part soever of our discourses agrees not with the primitive ends of speech, will not hold weight in the balance of the sanctuary. It will therefore nearly concern us to enter upon this scrutiny, to bring our words to this touchstone: for tho in our depraved estimate the Eloquence of Language is more regarded than the innocence, tho we think our words vanish with the breath that utters them, yet they become records in Gods Court, are laid up in his Archives as witnesses either for, or against us: for he who is truth it self hath told us, that *By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemn'd*, Mat. 12. 37.

S E C T. II.

*Of the manifold Abuse of  
Speech.*

I. **A**ND now since the original designs of speaking are so noble, so advantageous, one would be apt to conclude no rational creature would be tempted to pervert them, since 'tis sure he can substitute none for them, that can equally conduce, either to his honor, or interest.

2. **Y**ET experience (that great baffle of speculation) assures us the thing is too possible, and brings in all ages matter of fact to confute our suppositions. So liable alas is speech to be depraved, that the Scripture describes it as the source of all our other depravation. Original sin came first out at the mouth by speaking, before it entred in by eating. The first use we find *Eve* to have made of her language, was to enter parly with the temter, and from that to become a temter to her husband. And immediatly upon the fall, guilty *Adam* frames his tongue to a frivolous excuse

## 8 The Government of the Tongue.

cuse, which was much less able to cover his sin than the fig-leaves were his nakedness. And as in the infancy of the first world, the tongue had licked up the venom of the old serpent, so neither could the Deluge wash it off in the second. No sooner was that small colony (where-with the depopulated earth was to be replanted) come forth of the Ark, but we meet with *Cham* a delator to his own father, inviting his brethren to that execrable spectacle of their parents nakedness.

3. Nor did this only run in the blood of that accursed Person; the holy seed was not totally free from its infection, even the Patriarchs themselves were not exempt. *Abraham* used a repeated collusion in the case of his wife, and exposed his own integrity to preserve her chastity. *Isaac* the heir of his blessing, was son of his infirmity also, and acted over the same scene upon *Rebecca's* account. *Jacob* obtain'd his fathers blessing by a flat lie. *Simeon* and *Levi* spake not only falsely, but insidiously, nay hypocritically, abusing at once their proselytes, and their religion, for the effecting their cruel designs upon the *Sichemites*. *Moses* tho a man of an unparalleled meekness, yet spake unadvisedly  
with

*with his lips*, Psal. 106, 33. *David* uttered a bloody vow against *Nabal*, spake words smoother than oil to *Uriah*, when he had don him one injury, and design'd him another. 'Twere endless to reckon up those several instances, the old Testament gives us of these lapses of the tongue: neither want there divers in the new; tho there is one of so much horror, as supercedes the naming more, I mean that of *St. Peter* in his reiterated abjuring his Lord, a crime which (abstracted from the intention) seems worse then that of *Judas*: that traitor owned his relation, cried *Master Master* even when he betraied him, so that had he bin mesured only by his tongue, he might have past for the better disciple.

4. THESE are sad instances, not recorded to patronize the sin, but to excite our caution. It was a Politic inference of the elder of Israel in the case of *Jehu*; *Behold two Kings stood not before him, how then shall we stand?* 2. Kings 10. And we may well apply it to this; if persons of so circumspect piety, have bin thus overtaken, what security can there be for our wretchless osцитancy? If those who kept their mouths as it were

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*with a bridle*, Psal. 39. 1. could not alwaies preserve them innocent, to what guilts may not our unrestrained licentious tongues hurry us? Those which, as the Psalmist speaketh Psalm 73. 9. *go thro the world*, are in that unbounded range very likely to meet with him who walks the same round, Job. 2. 2. and by him be tuned and set to his key, be scrwed and wrested from their proper use, and made subservient to his vilest designs.

5. AND would God this were only a probable supposition! but alas experience supplants the use of conjecture in the point; we do not only presume it may be so, but actually find it is so. For amidst the universal depravation of our faculties, there is none more notorious then that of speech. Whither shall we turn us to find it in its pristine integrity? Amidst that infinity of words in which we exhaust our breath, how few are there which do at all correspond with the original designation of speech; nay which do not flatly contradict it? To what unholy, uncharitable purposes is that useful faculty perverted? That which was meant to serve as the perfume of the tabernacle, to send up the incenses of praises and prayers,  
now

now exhales in impious vapors, to eclipse if it were possible the Father of light. That which should be the store-house of relief and refreshment to our brethren, is become a magazine of all offensive weapons against them, *spears and arrows and sharp swords*, as the Psalmist often phrases it. We do not only fall by the slipperiness of our tongues, but we deliberately discipline and train them to mischief. *We bend our tongues as our bows for lies*, as the Prophet speaks, Jer. 9. 3. And in a word, what God affirmed of the old world in relation to thoughts, is too applicable to our words, *they are evil and that continually*, Gen. 6. 5. and that which was intended for the instrument, the aid of human society, is become the disturber, the pest of it.

6. I shall not attempt a particular discussion of all the vices of the tongue: it doth indeed pass all Geography to draw an exact Map of that *world of iniquity*, as St. James calls it. I shall only draw the greater lines, and distribute it into its principal and more eminent parts, which are distinguishable as they relate to God, our Neighbor, and our selves; in each of which I shall rather make an essay by

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way of instance, then attempt an exact enumeration or survey.

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### SECT. III.

#### *Of Atheistical Discourse.*

I. **I** Begin with those which relate to God, this poor despicable member the tongue being of such a gigantic insolence tho not size, as even to make war with heaven. 'Tis true every disordered speech doth remotely so, as it is a violation of Gods law; but I now speak only of those which as it were attaque his person, and immediatly fly in the face of Omnipotency. In the highest rank of these we may well place all Atheistical Discourse, which is that bold sort of rebellion, which strikes not only at his Authority, but himself: Other blasphemies level some at one Attribute, some another; but this by a more compendious impiety, shoots at his very being, and as if it scorn'd those peice-male guilts; sets up a single monster big enough to devour them all: for all inferior



ferior profaneness is as much outdated by Atheism, as is religion itself.

2. TIME was when the inveighing against this, would have bin thought a very impertinent subject in a Christian nation, and men would have replied upon me as the *Spartan* Lady did, when she was ask'd what was the punishment for adulteresses, *There are no such things here.* Nay even amongst the most barbarous people, it could have concerned but some few single persons; no numbers, much less societies of men, having ever excluded the belief of a Deity. And perhaps it may at this day concern them as little as ever; for amidst the various Deities and worships of those remoter nations, we have yet no account of any that renounce all. 'Tis only our light hath so blinded us: so that God may upbraid us as he did Israel, *Hath a nation changed their gods which yet are no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that, which doth not profit.* Jer. 2. 11. This madness is now the inclosure, the peculiarity of those, who by their names and institution should be Christians: as if that natural Aphorism, *That when things are at the height they must fall again,* had place here also, and

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and our being of the most excellent, most elevated religion, were but the preparative to our being of none.

3. 'Tis indeed deplorable to see, how the professors of no God begin to vie numbers with all the differing persuasions in religion, so that Atheism seems to be the gulph that finally swallows up all our sects. It has struck on a sudden into such a reputation, that it scorns any longer to feulk, but own's it self more publicly than most men dare do the contrary. 'Tis set down in the seat of the scorner, and since it cannot argue, resolves to laugh all Piety out of countenance; and having seized the mint, nothing shall pass for wit that hath not its stamp, and with it there is no mettall of so base an alloy, but shall go current. Every the dullest creature that can but stoutly disclaim his maker, has by it sufficiently secured its title to ingenuity; and such measures being once established, no wonder at its sholes of profelytes, when it gives on the one hand licence to all sensual inordinances, permits them to be as much beasts as they will, or can; and yet tells them on the other, that they are the more men for it. Sure 'tis not strange that a hook thus doubly baited  
should

should catch many. Either of those allurements single, we see has force enough. The charms of sensuality are so fascinating, that even those who believe another world, and the severe revenges that will there attend their luxuries, yet chuse to take them in present with all the dismal reversions. And then sure it cannot but be very good news to such a one to be told, that that after-reckoning is but a false alarm, and his great willingness to have it true, will easily incline him to believe it is so. And doubtless were Atheism traced up to its first causes, this would be found the most operative; 'tis so convenient for a man that will have no God to controul or restrain him, to have none to punish him neither; that that utility passes into argument, and he will rather put a cheat upon his understanding by concluding there is no future account, then leave such a sting in his pleasures, as the remembrance of it must needs prove. This seems to be the original and first rise of this impiety, it being impossible for any man that sees the whole, nay but the smallest part of the Universe, to doubt of a first and supreme Being, until from the consciousness of his

his provocations, it become his interest there should be none.

4. THIS is indeed, considering the depravation of the world, a pretty fast tenure for Atheism to hold by; yet it has of late twisted its cord, and got that other string to its bow we before mentioned. Its bold monopolizing of wit and reason compells, as the other invited men. This we may indeed call the devils puffs, by which he hath filled up his troops; men are afraid of being reproched for silly and irrational, in giving themselves to a blind belief of what they do not see. And this bugbear frights them from their religion; resolving they will be *no fools for Christs sake*, 1. Cor. 4. 13. I dare appeal to the breasts of many in this age, whether this have not bin one of the most prevalent temptations with them to espouse the tenet; and tho perhaps they at first took it up, only in their own defence, for fear of being thought fools, yet that fear soon converts into ambition of being thought wits. They do not satisfy themselves with deserting their religion, unless they revile it also; remembering how themselves were laught out of it, they essay to do the like by others. Yea  
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so zealous propugners are they of their negative Creed, that they are importunately diligent to instruct men in it, and in all the little sophistries and colors for defending it: so that he that would measure the opinions by their industry, and the remissness of believers, would certainly think that the great interest of Eternity lay wholly on their side. Yet I take not this for any argument of the confidence of this persuasion, but the contrary: for we know they are not the secure, but the desperate undertakings, where men are most desirous of partners, and there is somewhat of horror in an uncouth way, which makes men unwilling to travail it alone.

5. THE truth is, tho these men speak big, and prescribe as positively to their pupils, as if they had some counter revelation to confute those of *Moses* and *Christ*, yet were their secret thoughts laid open, there would scarce be found the like assurance there. I will not say to what reprobate sense some particular persons may have provoked God to deliver them, but in the generality. I believe one may affirm, that there is seldom an infidelity so sanguine as to exclude all fears. Their

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most bold Thefts, That there is no God, no judgment, no hell, is often met with an inward tremulous Hypothesis, What if there be? I dare in this remit me to themselves, and challenge (not their consciences, who profess to have none, but) their natural ingenuity to say, whether they have not sometimes such damps and shiverings within them. If they shall say, that these are but the reliques of prepossession and education, which their reason soon dissipates, Let me then ask them farther, whether they would not give a considerable sum to be infallibly ascertained there were no such thing: now no sensible man would give a farthing to be secured from a thing which his reason tells him is impossible; therefore if they would give any thing (as I dare say they themselves cannot deny that they would) 'tis a tacite demonstration that they are not so sure as they pretend to be.

6. I might here join issue upon the whole, and press them with the unreasonableness, the desingenuousness of embracing a profession to which their own hearts have an inward reluctance, nay the imprudence of governing their lives  
by

by that position, which for ought they know may be (nay they actually fear is) false, and if it be, must inevitably immerse them in endless ruin. But I must remember my design limits me only to the faults of the Tongue; and therefore I must not follow this chase beyond those bounds. I shall only extend it to my proper subject, that of Atheistical talk, wherein they make as mad an adventure as in any other of their enormous practices, nay perhaps in some respects a worse.

7. IN the first place 'tis to be considered, that if there be a God, he, as well as men, may be provoked by our words as well as deeds. Secondly 'tis possible he may be more. Our ill deeds may be done upon a vehement impulse of temptation; some profit or pleasures may transport and hurry us; and they may at least have this alleviation, that we did them to please or advantage our selves, not to spight God. But Atheistical words cannot be so palliated: they are arrows directly shot against heaven, and can come out of no quiver but malice: for 'tis certain there never was man that said, There was no God, but he wished it first. We know

what an enhancement our injuries to each other receive from their being malicious : and sure they will do so much more to God, whose principal demand from us is, that we give him our heart. But thirdly this implieth a malice of the highest sort. Human spight is usually confined within some bounds, aims sometimes at the goods, sometimes at the fame, at most but at the life of our neighbor : but here is an accumulation of all those, back'd with the most prodigious insolence. 'Tis God only that has power of annihilation, and we (vile worms) seek here to steal that incommunicable right, and retort it upon himself, and by an anti-creative power would unmake him who has made us. Nay lastly, by this we have not only the utmost guilt of single rebels, but we become ring-leaders also; draw in others to that accursed association : for 'tis only this liberty of discourse that hath propagated Atheism. The Devil might perhaps by inward suggestions have drawn in here and there a single Profelyte; but he could never have had such numbers, had he not used some as decoies to ensnare others.

8. AND now let the brisk Atheist a  
little



little consider, what these aggravations will amount to. 'Twas good counsel was given to the Athenians, to be very sure *Philip* was dead, before they expressed their joy at his death, lest they might find him alive to revenge that hasty triumph. And the like I may give to these men, Let them be very sure there is no God, before they presume thus to defie him, lest they find him at last assert his being in their destruction. Certainly nothing less then a demonstration can justify the reasonableness of such a daring. And when they can produce that, they have so far outgon all the comprehensions of mankind, they may well challenge the liberty of their Tongue, and say; *They are their own, who is Lord over them*, Psalm. 12. 4.

9. BUT till this be don, 'twere well they would soberly ballance the hazards of their liberty with the gains of it. The hazards are of the most dreadful kind; the gains of the slightest: the most is but a vain applause of wit for an impious jest, or of reason for a deep considerer; and yet even for that they must in-croach on the Devils right to, who is commonly the promter, and therefore if there be any credit in it may justly challenge

challenge it. Indeed 'tis to be fear'd he will at last prove the master wit, when as for those little loans he makes them, he gets their souls in mortgage. Would God they would consider betimes, what a woful raillery that will be, which for ought they know may end in *gnashing of teeth*.

10. THE next impiety of the Tongue is Swearing, that foolish sin which plaies the Platonic to damnation, and courts it purely for it self; without any of the appendant allurements which other sins have: a vice which for its guilt may justify the sharpest, and for its customariness the frequentest invectives which can be made against it. But it has bin assaulted so often by better pens, and has shewed it self so much proof against all Homily, that it is needless as discouraging a task for me to attempt it. 'Tis indeed a thing taken up so perfectly without all sense, that 'tis the less wonder to find it maintain its self upon the same principle 'tis founded, and continue in the same defiance to reason wherein it began.

11. ALL therefore that I shall say concerning it, is to express my wonder how it has made a shift to twist it self with the former sin of Atheism, by which according

cording to all rules of reasoning it seems to be superseded: and yet we see none own God more in their oaths, then those that disavow him in their other discourse. Nay such men swear not only to swell their language, and make it sound more full and blustering; but even when they most desire to be believed. What an absurdity of wickedness is this? Is there a God to swear by, and is there none to believe in, none to pray to? We call it frenzy to see a man fight with a shadow: but sure 'tis more so, to invoke it. Why then do these men of reason make such solemn appeals (for such every oath is) to a mere Chimera and Phantasm? It would make one think they had some inward belief of a Deity, which they upon surprizal thus blurt out: if it argue not this, it does something worse, and becomes an evidence how much the appearance of a sin recommends it to them, that they thus catch at it, without examining how it will consist with another they like better. These are indeed wholesale Chapmen to Satan, that do not truck and barter one crime for another, but take the whole herd: and tho by reason of their disagreeing kinds they are apt to  
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gore and worry each other, yet he still keeps up his old policy, and will not let one Devil cast out another. A league shall be made between the most discordant sins, and there shall be a God, or there shall be none, according as opportunity serves to provoke him: so assuming to himself a power which even Omnipotence disclaims, the reconciling contradictions. And he succeeds in it as far as his concern reaches: for tho he cannot solve the repugnancies in reason, yet as long as he can unite the sins in mens practice, he has his design; nay has at once the gain and the sport of fooling these great pretenders to ratiocination.

12. A third sort of impious discourse there is, which yet is bottom'd on the most sacred, I mean those profane paraphrases that are usually made upon the holy Text, many making it the subject of their cavils, and others of their mirth. Some do it out of the former Atheistical principle, and I cannot but confess they act consonantly to themselves in it, for 'tis but a needful artifice for men to disparage those testimonies, which they fear may be brought against them. But there are others who not only profess a God, but also own  
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the sacred Scripture for his word, and yet use it as cursorily as the others. And these I confess, are riddles of profaneness, that hang, as some have pictured *Solomon*, between heaven and hell, borrow the Christians faith; and the Atheists drollery upon it: and 'tis hard to say in which they are more in earnest. It is indeed scandalous to see, to what despicable uses those holy Oracles are put: such as should a Heathen observe, he would little suspect them to be own'd by us as the rule of our religion, and could never think they were ever meant for any thing beyond a whetstone for wit. One tries his Logic upon them, and objects to the sense; another his Rhetoric, and quarrels at the phrase; a third his contrivance, and think he could have woven the parts with a better contexture, never considering, that unless they could confute the Divinity of their original, all these accusations are nothing else but direct blasphemy, the making God *such a one as themselves*, Psal. 50. 21. and charging him with those defects which are indeed their own. They want learning or industry to sound the depth of those sacred treasures, and therefore they decry the

Scripture as mean and poor; and to justify their own wisdom, dispute Gods. This is as if the mole should complain the sun is dark, because he dwells under ground, and sees not his splendor. Men are indeed in all instances apt to speak ill of all things they understand not, but in none more then this. Their ignorance of locall customs, Idioms of language, and several other circumstances, renders them incompetent judges; (as has bin excellently evinced by a late Author.) 'Twill therefore besit them, either to qualify themselves better, or to spare their Criticisms. But upon the whole, I think I may challenge any ingenious man, to produce any writing of that antiquity, whose phrase and genius is so accommodated to all successions of ages. Styles and waies of address we know grow obsolete, and are almost antiquated as garments: and yet after so long a tract of time, the Scripture must (by considering men) be confest to speak not only properly, but often politely and elegantly to the present age: a great argument that it is the dictate of him that is, *The same yesterday, to day, and for ever,* Hebr. 13. 7.

13. BUT besides these more solemn traducers, there are a lighter ludicrous sort of profaners; who use the Scripture as they do odd ends of plaies, to furnish out their jests; clothe all their little impertinent conceits in its language, and debase it by the mixture of such miserable trifles, as themselves would be ashamed of, were they not hightned and inspirited by that profaneness. A bible phrase serves them in discourse as the haut-goust do's in diet, to give a relish to the most insipid stuff. And were it not for this Magazine, a great many mens raillery would want supplies: for there are divers who make a great noise of wit, that would be very mute if this one Topic were barr'd them. And indeed it seems a tacite confession, that they have little of their own, when they are fain thus to commit sacriledg to drive on the trade. But sure 'tis a pitiful pretence to ingenuity that can be thus kept up, there being little need of any other faculty but memory to be able to cap Texts. I am sure such repetitions out of other books would be thought pedantic and silly. How ridiculous would a man be, that should alwaies enterlard his

discourse with fragments of *Horace*, or *Virgil*, or the Aphorisms of *Pythagoras*, or *Seneca*? Now 'tis too evident, that it is not from any superlative esteem of sacred Writ, that it is so often quoted: and why should it then be thought a specimen of wit to do it there, when 'tis folly in other instances? The truth is, 'tis so much the reserve of those who can give no better Testimony of their parts, that methinks upon that very score it should be given over by those that can. And sure were it possible for any thing that is so bad to grow unfashionable, the world has had enough of this to be cloied with it: but how fond soever men are of this divertisement, 'twill finally prove that *mirth* *Solomon* speaks of, which *ends in heavinefs*, Prov. 14. 13. for certainly whether we estimate it according to human or divine measures, it must be a high provocation of God.

14. LET any of us but put the case in our own persons: suppose we had written to a friend, to advertise him of things of the greatest importance to himself, had given him ample and exact instructions: back'd them with earnest exhortations and conjurings not to neglect his  
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own concern, and lastly enforced all with the most moving expressions of kindness and tenderness to him: suppose, I say, that after all this, the next news we should hear of that letter, were to have it put in doggrel rime, to be made sport for the rabble, or at the best have the most eminent phrases of it pickt out and made a common by-word: I would fain know how any of us would resent such a mixture of ingratitude and contumely. I think I need make no minute application. The whole design of the Bible do's sufficiently answer, nay out-go the first part of the parallel, and God knows our vile usage of it do's too much (I fear too literally) adapt the latter. And if we think the affront to base for one of us, can we believe God will take it in good part? That were to make him not only more stupid then any man, but as much so as the heathen Idols, that have *eies and see not*: Psalm. 115. 5. And 'tis sure the highest madness in the world, for any man that believes that there is a God, to imagine he will finally sit down by such usage.

15. BUT if we weigh it in the scale of religion; the crime will yet appear more  
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heinous. Mere natural Piety has taught men to receive the Responses of their Gods with all possible veneration. What applications had the Delphic Oracle from all parts, and from all ranks of men? What confidence had they in its prediction, and what obedience did they pay to its advice? If we look next into the Mosaical Oeconomy, we shall see with what dreadful solemnities that Law was promulged, what an awful reverence was paid to the mount whence it issued, how it was fenced from any rude intrusions either of men or beasts: and after it was written in tables, all the whole equipage of the Tabernacle, was designed only for its more decent repository, the Ark it self receiving its value only from what it had in custody. Yea such a hallowing influence had it, as transfused a relative sanctity even to the meanest utensils, none of which were after to be put to common uses: the very perfume was so peculiar and sacred, that it was a capital crime to imitate the composition. Afterwards when more of the divine revelations were committed to writing, the Jews were such scrupulous reverers of it, that 'twas the business of  
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of the Masorites., to number not only the sections and lines, but even the words and letters of the old Testament, that by that exact calculation they might the better secure it from any surreptitious practices.

19. AND sure the new Testament is not of less concern then the old: nay the Apostle asserts it to of far greater, and which we shall be more accountable for, *For if the word spoken by Angels were steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence, how shall we escape if we neglect so great Salvation, which at the first began to be spoken to us by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him?* Heb. 2. 23. And it is in another place the inference of the same Apostle, from the excellence of the Gospel above the Law, that we should *serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear*, Heb. 12. 28. And certainly 'tis but an ill essay of that reverence and godly fear, to use that very Gospel so irreverently and ungodlily as men now do. If we pass from the Apostolic to the next succeeding ages of the Church; we find the Primitive Christians lookt on their Bibles as their most im-

important treasure. Such was the outward respects they paid to them, (of which the standing up at the reading of the Gospel, still in use among us, is a faint memorial) that the heathen persecutors made it one part of their examination of the Christians brought to their tribunals, *What those books were which they adored while they read them?* Such was their intimate esteem, that they exposed all things else to the rapine of their enemies, so they might secure those volumes. Nor was this only an heroic piece of zeal in some, but indispensably required of all: insomuch that when in the heat of persecution, they were commanded to deliver up their Bibles to be burnt, the Church gave no indulgence for that necessity of the times, but exhorted men rather to deliver up their lives: and those whose courage failed them in the encounter; were not only branded by the infamous name of *Traditors*, but separated from the communion of the faithful, and not readmitted till after many years of the severest penance.

17. I have given this brief narration, with a desire that the reader will compare the practice of former times with those

those of the present, and see what he can find either among Heathens, Jews, or Christians, that can at all patronize our profaneness. There was no respect thought too much for the false Oracles of a falser God: and yet we think no contents too great for those of the true. The moral Law was so sacred to the Jews, that no parts of its remotest retinue, those ceremonial attendants, were to be looked on as common: and we who are equally obliged by that Law, laugh at that by which we must one day be judged. The Ritual, the Preceptive, the Prophetic, and all other parts of sacred Writ, were most sedulously, most religiously guarded by them: and we look upon them as a winter nights tale, from which to fetch matter of sport and merriment. Lastly the first Christians paid a veneration to, nay sacrificed their lives to rescue their Bibles from the unworthy usage of the Heathens, and we our selves expose them to worse: they would but have burnt them, we scorn and vilify them, and outvy even the persecutors malice with our contempt. These are miserable Antithesis's; yet this God knows is the case with too many. I wonder what

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new state of Felicity hereafter these men have fancied to themselves: for sure they cannot think these retrograde steps can ever bring them so much as to the Heathens Elyzium, much less the Christian Heaven.

18. IT will therefore concern those who do not quite renounce their claim to that Heaven, to consider soberly, how inconsistent their practice is with those hopes. A man may have a great estate conveyed to him; but if he will madly burn, or childishly make paper kites of his Deeds, he forfeits his title with his evidence: and those certainly that deal so with the conveyances of their eternal inheritance, will not speed better. If they will thus dally and play with them, God will be as little in earnest in the performance, as they are in the reception of the promises; nay he will take his turn of mocking too, and when their scene of mirth is over, his will begin. A dreadful menace of this we have, Prov. i. 24. which deserves to be set down at large, *Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded: But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof;*  
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*I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh. When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind: when distress and anguish cometh upon you, then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer, they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me.* Would God I could as well transcribe this Text into mens hearts, and there would need no more, to secure the whole Canon of Scripture from their profanation. Could men but look a little before them, and apprehend how in the daies of their distress and agony, they will gasp for those comforts which they now turn into ridicule; they would not thus madly defeat themselves, cut off their best and only reserve, and with a pitiful content cast away those Cordials, which will then be the only support of their fainting spirits. As for those who deride Scripture upon Atheistical grounds, all I shall say is to refer to what I have said in the beginning of this Section; they had need be very well assured that foundation be not sandy: for if it be, this reproching Gods word will be a considerable addition to the guilt of all their other hostility, and

how jolly soever they seem at present, it may be when that question they are so willing to take for granted, is by death drawing near a decision, some of their confidence will retire, and leave them in an amazed expectation of somewhat, which they are sure cannot be good for them, who have so ill provided for it. Then perhaps their merry vein will fail them, and not their infidelity, but their despair may keep them from invoking that Power they have so long derided. 'Tis certain it has so happened with some: for as Practical, so Speculative wickedness, has usually another aspect, when it stands in the shadow of death, then in the dazzling beams of health and vigor. It would therefore be wisdom before hand to draw it out of this deceitful light, and by sober serious thoughts place it as near as may be in those circumstances in which 'twill then appear: and then sure to hearts that are not wholly petrified, 'twill seem safer to own a God early and upon choice, than late upon compulsion.

19. HOWEVER if they will not yield themselves Homagers, yet the mere possibility of their being in the wrong, should



should methinks perswade them at least to be civil adversaries. A generous man will not pursue even a falling enemy with revilings and reproch, much less will a wise man do it to one who is in any the least probability of revenging it: it being a received Maxim, That there is no greater folly then for a man to let his tongue betray him to mischief. Let it therefore in this case at least stand neuter, that if by their words they be not justified, yet by their words they may not be condemned. They can be no losers by it: for at the utmost, 'tis but keeping in a little unsavory breath, which (supposing no God to be offended with it) is yet nauseous to all those men who believe there is one. To those indeed who have a zeal for their faith, there can be no Discourse so intolerable, so disobliging: it turns conversation into skirmishing, and perpetual disputes. The Egyptians were so zealous for their brutish Deities, that *Moses* presumed the Israelites sacrificing of those beasts they adored, must needs set them in an uproar, *Exod. 8. 26.* And sure those who do acknowledge a Divine power, cannot contentedly sit by to hear him blasphemed. 'Tis true there  
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are some so cool, that, they are of the same mind for God, that *Gideons* father was for *Baal*, Judg. 6. 31. *Let him plead for himself*, they will not appear in his defence: yet even these have a secret consciousness, that they ought to do so, and therefore have some uneasiness in being put to the Test: so that it cannot be a pleasant entertainment even for them. And therefore those who have no fear of God to restrain them, should methinks, unless they be perfectly of the temper of the unjust Judg., Luke 17. 1. in respect of men abstain from all sorts of impious discourse; and at least be civil, tho they will not be pious.

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## SECT. IV.

*Of Detraction.*

WE have seen in the last Section the insolence of the Tongue towards God; and sure we cannot expect it should pay more reverence to men. If there be those that dare *stretch their mouths against heaven*, Psalm. 7. 39. we are not to wonder if there be more that will *shoot their arrows, even bitter words*, against the best on earth, Psalm. 64. 3. I shall not attempt to ransack the whole quiver, by shewing every particular sort of verbal injuries which relate to our Neighbors, but rather chuse out some few which either for the extraordinariness of their guilt, or the frequency of their practice are the most eminent. I begin with *Detraction*, in which both those qualities concur: for as in some instances 'tis one of the highest sins, so in the general 'tis certainly one of the most common, and by being so becomes insen-

sensible. This vice (above all others) seems to have maintained not only its Empire, but its reputation too. Men are not yet convinced heartily that it is a sin: or if any, not of so deep a die, or so wide an extent as indeed it is. They have if not false, yet imperfect notions of it, and by not knowing how far its Circle reaches, do often like young Conjurors step beyond the limits of their safety.

THIS I am the apter to believe, because I see some degree of this fault cleave to those, who have eminently corrected all other exorbitancies of the Tongue. Many who would startle at an Oath, whose stomachs as well as consciences recoil at an obscenity, do yet slide glibly into a Detraction: which yet methinks persons otherwise of strict conversations should not do frequently and habitually, had not their easy thoughts of the guilt smoothed the way to it.

IT may therefore be no unkind attempt, to try to disentangle from this snare by displaying it; shewing the whole contexture of the sin, how 'tis woven with treads of different sizes, yet the least of them strong enough to nooze  
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and intrap us. And alas, if Satan fetter us, 'tis indifferent to him whether it be by a cable or a hair. Nay perhaps the smallest sins are his greatest stratagems. The finer his line is spun, the less shadow it casts, and is less apt to fright us from the hook; and tho there be much odds between a talent of lead and a grain of sand, yet those grains may be accumulated till they out-weigh the talent. It was a good reply of *Plato's*, to one who murmured at his reproving him for a small matter, *Custom* saies he, *is no small matter*. And indeed supposing any sin were so small as we are willing to fancy most, yet an indulgent habit even of that would be certainly ruinous: that indulgence being perfectly opposite to the Love of God, which better can consist with the indeliberate commissions of many sins, then with an allowed persistence in any one.

BUT in this matter of Detraction, I can not yield that any is small, save only comparatively with some other of the same kind which is greater: for absolutely considered there is even in the very lowest degrees of it, a flat contradiction to the grand rule of Charity,

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the loving our neighbor as our selves. And surely that which at once violates the sum of the whole second Table of the Law, for so our Saviour renders it, Luk. 10. 7. must be lookt on as no trifling, inconsiderable guilt. To evi-  
dence this I shall in the Anatomizing this sin apply this Rule to every part of it: first consider it in Gross, in its en-  
tire body, and after descend to its seve-  
ral limbs.

I. DETRACTION in the native importance of the word, signifies the withdrawing or taking off from a thing, and as it is applied to the reputation, it denotes the impairing or lessening a man in point of fame, rendring him less valued and esteemed by others, which is the final aim of Detraction, tho pur-  
sued by various means.

2. THIS is justly look'd on as one of the most unkind designs one man can have upon another there being implanted in every mans nature a great tender-  
ness of Reputation: and to be careless of it is lookt on as a mark of a degener-  
ous mind. On which account *Solon* in his laws pretumes that he that will sell his own fame will also sell the pub-  
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lic interest. 'Tis true, many have improved this too far; blown up this native spark into such flames of Ambition; as has set the world in a combustion; Such as *Alexander*, *Cesar*, and others, who sacrificed Hecatombs to their Fame, fed it up to a prodigy upon a Canibal diet, the flesh of Men: yet even these excesses serve to evince the universal consent of mankind, that Reputation is a valuable and desirable thing.

3. Nor have we only the suffrage of man, but the attestation of God himself; who frequently in Scripture gives testimony to it: *A good name is better then great riches*, Prov. 22. 1. And again, *A good name is better then precious ointment*, Eccles. 7. 1. And the more to recommend it, he proposes it as a reward to piety and vertue, as he menaces the contrary to wickedness. *The memory of the just shall be blessed, but the name of the wicked shall rot*. Prov. 10. 7. And that we may not think this an invitation fitted only to the Jewish Oeconomy, the Apostle goes farther, and proposes the endeavor after it as a duty, *Whatsoever things are of good report, if there by any*

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*vertue, and if there by any praise, think on these things, Phil. 4. 8.*

4. AND accordingly good men have in their estimate ranked their names the next degree to their Souls, prefer'd them before goods or life. Indeed 'tis that which gives us an inferior sort of Immortality, and makes us even in this world survive our selves. This part of us alone continues verdant in the grave, and yields a perfume, when we are stench and rottenness: the consideration whereof has so prevailed with the more generous Heathens, that they have cheerfully quitted life in contemplation of it. Thus *Epaminondas* alacriously expired, in confidence that he left behind him a perpetual memory of the victories he had atchieved for his Country. *Brutus* so courted the fame of a Patriot, that he brake thro all the obstacles of gratitude and humanity to attain it: he cheerfully bare the defeat of his attempt, in contemplation of the glory of it. 'Twere endless to recount the stories of the *Codri*, *Decii*, and *Curtii*, with the train of those noble Heroes, who in behalf of their Countries devoted themselves to certain death.

5. BUT we need no forreign Medi-  
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ums to discover the value of a good name: let every man weigh it but in his own scales, retire to his breast, and there reflect on that impatience he has when his own reputè is invaded. To what dangers, to what guilts do's sometimes the mere fancy of a reproch hurry men? It makes them really forfeit that vertue from whence all true reputation springs, and like *Esop's* dog loose the substance by too greedy catching at the shadow; an irrefragable proof how great a price they set upon their fame.

6. AND then since reason sets it at so high a rate, and passion at a higher, we may conclude the violating this interest, one of the greatest injuries in human commerce; such as is resented not only by the rash, but the sober: so that we must pick out only blocks and stones, the stupid and insensible part of mankind, if we think we can inflict this wound without an afflictive smart. And tho the power of Christianity do's in some so moderate this resentment, that none of these blows shall recoil, no degree of revenge be attempted; yet that do's not at all justify or excuse the inflicter. It may indeed be a useful trial  
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of the patience, and meekness of the defamed; yet the defamer has not the less either of crime or danger: not of crime, for that is rather enhanced than abated by the goodness of the person injur'd; not of danger, since God is the more immediate avenger of those who attempt not to be their own. But if the injury meet not with this meekness (as in this vindictive age 'tis manifold odds it will not) it then acquires another accumulative guilt, stand answerable not only for its own positive ill, but for all the accidental which it causes in the sufferer, who by this means is rob'd not only of his reputation, but his innocence also, provoked to those unchristian returns, which draw God also into the enmity, and set him at once at war with heaven and earth. And tho' as to his immediate judgment, he must bear his iniquity, answer for his impatience: yet as in all Civil insurrections the ring-leader is lookt on with a peculiar severity, so doubtless in this case, the first provoker has by his seniority and primogeniture a double portion of the guilt, and may consequently expect of the punishment, according to the Doom of our Savior,

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*Woe be to that man by whom the offence cometh*, Mat. 18. 7.

8. INDEED there is such a train of mischiefs usually following this sin, that 'tis scarce possible to make a full estimate of its malignity. 'Tis one of the grand incendiaries which disturbs the peace of the world, and has a great share in most of its quarrels. For could we examine all the feuds which harraßs Persons, Families, nay sometimes Nations to, we should find the greater part take their rise from injurious reproachful Words; and that for one which is commenced upon the intuition of any real considerable interest, there are many which owe their being to this licentiousness of the Tongue.

9. IN regard therefore of its proper guilt, and all those remoter sins and miseries which ensue it, 'tis every mans great concern to watch over himself. Neither is it less in respect both of that universal aptness we have to this sin, and its being so perpetually at hand; that for others we must attend occasions and convenient seasons, but the opportunities of this are alwayes ready: I can do my neighbor this injury, when I can do him no other. Besides the multitude of objects do proportionably

tionably multiply both the possibilities and incitations; and the objects here are as numerous, as there are Persons in the world I either know, or have heard of. For tho some sorts of Detractions seem confined to those to whom we bear particular malice, yet there are other kinds of it more ranging, which fly indifferently at all. Lastly this sin has the aid almost of universal example, which is an advantage beyond all the others, there being scarce any so irresistible insinuation as the practice of those with whom we converse, and no subject of converse so common as the defaming our neighbors.

10. SINCE then the path is so slippery, it had not need be dark too. Let us then take in the best light we can, and attentively view this sin in its several branches, that by a distinct discovery of the divers acts and degrees of it, we may the better be armed against them all,

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SECT V.

*Of Lying Defamation.*

1. **D**ETRACTION being ( as we have already said ) the lessning and impairing a man in his repute ; we may resolve, that what ever conduces to that end, is properly a Detraction. I shall begin with that which is most eminent, the spreading of Defamatory reports. These may be of two kinds ; either false, or true ; which tho they seem to be of very different complexions, yet may spring from the same stock, and drive at the same design. Let us first consider of the false.

2. **AND** this admits of various circumstances. Sometimes a man invents a perfect falsity of another : sometimes he that do's not invent it, yet reports it, tho he know it to be false : and a third sort there are, who having not certain knowledge whether it be false or no, do yet divulge it as an absolute certainty, or at least

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least with such artificial insinuations, as may bias the hearer on that hand. The former of these is a crime of so high, so disingenuous a nature, that tho many are vile enough to commit it, none are so impudent as to avow it. Even in this age of insulting vice, when almost all other wickedness appears bare-fac'd, this is feign to keep on the vizard. No man will own himself a false accuser: for if modesty do not restrain him, yet his very malice will; since to confess would be to defeat his design. Indeed it is of all other sins the most Diabolical, it being a conjunction of two of Satans most essential properties, Malice and Lying. We know 'tis his peculiar title to be *the Accuser of the brethren*: and when we transcribe his copy, we also assume his nature, intitle our selves to a descent from him, *Ye are of your Father the Devil*, Joh. 8. 44. We are by it render'd a sort of *Incubus* brats, the infamous progenies of the Lying spirit. It is indeed a sin of so gross, so formidable a bulk, that there needs no help of Optics to render it discernible, and therefore I need not farther expatiate on it.

3. THE next degree is not much short

short of it; what it wants is rather of invention than malice : for he that will so adopt anothers lie, shews he would willingly have bin its proper Father. It do's indeed differ, no more then the maker of adulterate wares, do's from the vender of them : and certainly there cannot be a more ignominious trade, then the being Hucksters to such vile Merchandize. Neither is the sin less then the baseness : we find the *Lover* of a lie ranked in an equal form of guilt with the *Maker*, Rev. 21. And surely he must be presumed to love it, that can descend to be the broker to it, help it to pass current in the world.

4. THE third sort of Detractors look a little more demurely, and with the woman in the Proverbs, Chap. 30. *wipe their mouths, and say they have don no wickedness.* They do not certainly know the falsity of what they report ; and their ignorance must serve them as an Amulet against the guilt both of deceit and malice : but I fear it will do neither. For first perhaps they are affectedly ignorant : they are so willing it should be true, that they have not attempted to examine it. But Secondly it do's not

suffice that I do not know the falsity; for to make me a true speaker, 'tis necessary I know the truth of what I affirm. Nay if the think were never so true, yet if I knew it not to be so, its truth will not secure me from being a liar: and therefore whoever endeavors to have that receiv'd for a certainty, which himself knows not to be so, offends against truth. The utmost that can consist with sincerity, is to represent it to others as doubtful as it appears to him. Yet even that how consonant soever to truth, is not to Charity. Even doubtful accusations leave a stain behind them, and often prove indelible injuries to the party accused: how much more then do the more positive and confident aspersions we have hitherto spoken of? Let me add only this concerning this later sort, that they are greater advancers of Defamatory designs, then the very first contrivers. For those upon a consciousness of their falseness are obliged to proceed cautiously, to pick out the credulous and least discerning persons, on whom to impose their fictions, and dare not produce them in all companies for fear of detection: but these in confidence that the untruth (if it be



be one) lies not at their door, speak it without any restraint in all places, at all times; and what the others are fain to whisper, they proclame; like our new Engine, which pretends to convey a whisper many miles off. So that as in the case of Stealing 'tis proverbially said, that if there were no receivers there would be no thieves; so in this of Slander, if there were fewer spreaders, there would be fewer forgers of Libels: the manufacture would be discouraged, if it had not these retailers to put off the wares.

5. Now to apply these practices to our rule of duty, there will need no very close inspection to discern the obliquity. The most superficial glance will evidence these severall degrees of Slanderers to do what they would not be willing to suffer. Who among them can be content to be falsely aspersed? Nay so far are they from that, that let but the shadow of their own calumny reflect on themselves, let any but truly tell them that they have falsely accused others, they grow raving and impatient, like a dog at a looking glass, fiercely combating that image which himself creates: and how smoothly soever the original lie slides from

from them, the Echo of it grates their ears. And indeed 'tis observable, that those who make the greatest havock of other mens reputation, are the most nicely tender of their own; which sets this sin of calumny in a most Diametrical opposition to the Evangelical precept of *Loving our neighbors as our selves*.

6. THUS much is discernable even in the surface of the crime: but if we look deeper and examine the motives, we shall find the foundation well agrees to the superstructure, they being usually one of these two, *Malice* or *Interest*. And indeed the thing is so disingenuous, so contrary to the dictates of Humanity as well as Divinity, that I must in reverence to our common nature, presume it must be some very forcible impellent, that can drive a man so far from himself. The Devil here plaies the Artift: and as the fatallest poisons to man are (they say) drawn from human bodies, so here he extracts the venem of our Irascible and Concupiscible part, and in it dips those arrows, which we thus shoot at one another.

7. 'TIS needless to harangue severally upon each. The world too experimentally

tally knows the force of both. *Malice* is that whirlwind, which has shook States and Families, no less then private Persons; a passion so impetuous and precipitate, that it often equally involves the Agent and the Patient: a malicious man being of like violence with those who flung in the three Children, Dan. 3. consumed by those flames into which he cast others. As for *Interest*, 'tis that universal Monarch to which all other Empires are Tributaries, to which men sacrifice not only their Consciences and Innocence, but (what is usually much dearer) their Sensualities and Vices. Those whom all the Divine (either) threats or promises, cannot perswade to mortify, nay but restrain one Lust; at *Mammons* beck will disclame many, and force their inclinations to comply with their Interest

8. AND whilst this sin of Calumny has two such potent Abettors, we are not to wonder at its growth: as long as men are malicious and designing, they will be traducing; those Cyclops's will be perpetually forging Thunderbolts, against which no innocence or vertue can be proof. And alas we daily find  
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too great effect of their industry. But tho these are the forgers of the more solemn deliberate calumnies, yet this sportive age hath produced another sort; there being men that defame others by way of divertisement, invent little stories that they may find themselves exercise, and the Town talk. This, if it must pass for sport, is such as *Solomon* describes, Prov. 26. 18, 19. *As a mad man that casteth firebrands, arrows and death, so is he that deceiveth his neighbor; and saith, am not I in sport?* He that shoots an arrow in jest, may kill a man in earnest; and he that gives himself liberty to play with his neighbors fame, may soon play it away. Most men have such an aptness to entertain sinister opinions of others, that they greedily draw in any suggestion of that kind; and one may as easily persuade the thirsty earth to refund the water she has suckt into her veins, as them to depösite a prejudice they have once taken up. Therefore such experiments upon fame, are as dangerous as that which *Alexander* is said to have made of the force of Naphtha upon his Page, from which he scarce escaped with life. These jocular slanders are often as mischie-

mischievous as those of deeper design, and have from the slightness of the temptation an enhancement of guilt. For sure he that can put such an interest of his neighbors in balance with a little fit of laughter, sets it at lower price than he that hopes to enrich or advance himself by it: and tho it pass among some for a specimen of Wit, yet it really lifts them among *Solomons* fools, who *make a mock at sin*, Prov. 14. 9. In the mean time since slander is a plant that can grow in all soils, since the frolick humor as well as the morose betraies to the guilt, who can hope to escape this *Scourge of the Tongue*, as the Wiseman calls it, Ec. 26. 6. which communicates with all? Persons of all ranks do mutually asperse, and are aspersed: so that he who would not have his credulity abused, has scarce a securer way, then (like that Astrologer, who made his Almanack give a tolerable account of the weather by a direct inversion of the common prognosticators,) to let his belief run quite counter to reports. Yea so Epidemic is this disease grown, that even religion (at least those parties and factions which assume that name) has got

a taint of it; each sect or opinion seeking to represent its Antagonist as odious as it can. And whilst they contend for speculative truth, they by mutual calumnies forfeit the practic: a thing that justly excites the grief of good men, to see that those who all pretend to the same Christianity, should only be unanimous in the violating that truth and Charity it prescribes.

10. AND if these be the weapons of our spiritual warfare, what may we think of the carnal? How are our secular animosities pursued, when our Speculations are thus managed? How easily do we run down the reputation of any who stand in the way either of our spleen or avarice? When *Joseph's* resolute purity had changed the scene of his Mistress's passion, she do's as readily shift that of guilt too, and fixes her crime upon him, Gen. 39. 14. So when *Ziba* had a mind to undermine *Mephibosheth* in his estate, he first practices upon his fame in a false accusation, 2 Sam. 16. 3. And alas how familiarly do we now see both these scenes repeated? Those who will not take vice into their bosoms, shall yet have it bespatter their faces: they who will not run

*to the same excess of riot*, must expect to be evil spoken of, 1 Pet. 4. 4. Nay not only pious men, but piety it self partakes of the same fate, falls under the two edg'd slander both of deceit and folly. And if men cannot be permitted quietly to enjoy their piety, much less will they those things whereof the world hath more gust, I mean secular advantages. There are still crimes to be discovered in the possessors of honors or Estates, and they wonderfully excite the zeal of those who would supplant them. What artifices are there to make them appear unworthy of what they have, that others more unworthy may succeed them? Nor are these storms only in the upper region, in the higher ranks of men; but if we pass thro all degrees, we shall find the difference is rather in the value of the things, then in the means of pursuing them. He that pretends to the meanest office do's as studiously disparage his competitor, as he that is rival'd for a kingdom. Nay even he that has but a merry humor to gratify, makes no scruple to do it with the loss of another mans reputation.

11. THUS do we accommodate every petty temporal interest at the cost of our eternal: and as an unskilful Fencer, whilst he is pursuing his thrust, exposes his body; so whilst we thus actuate our own malice, we abandon our selves to Satans, receive mortal wounds from him, only that we may give a few light scratches to one another. For as I have before said, there is nothing do's more secure his title to us, then this vice of Calumny, it bearing his proper impress and figure. And we may fear *Christ* will one day make the same Judgment of persons as he did of coin, and award them to him whose *Image and superscription they bear*, Mat.

22. 20.

12. AND now how great a madness is it to make costly oblations to so vile an Idol? This is indeed the worshiping our own Imaginations, preferring a malicious fiction before a reall felicity: and is but faintly resembled by him, who is said to have chosen to part with his Bishopric, rather then burn his Romance. Alas are there not gross corporal sins enough to ruine us, but must we have aëreal ones too, damn our selves with Chimera's, and by these forgeries of our  
brains



brains dream our selves to destruction?

13. LET all those then who thus unhappily employ their inventive faculty, timely consider, how unthriving a trade 'tis finally like to prove; that all their false accusations of others will rebound in true ones upon themselves. It do's often so in this world, where many times the most clandestine contrivances of this kind meet with detection. Or if they should happen to keep on the disguise here, yet 'twill infallibly be torn off at the great day of manifestation, when before God, Angels, and Men, they will be render'd infinitely more vile, then 'twas possible for them here to make others.

SECT.

## S E C T. V I.

*Of Uncharitable Truth.*

1. **I**N the next place we are to consider of the other branch of Defamatory reports, viz. such as are true: which tho they must be confest to be of a lower form of guilt then the former, yet as to the kind, they equally agree in the definition of Detraction, since 'tis possible to impair a mans credit by true reports as well as by false.

2. T O clear this I shall first observe, that altho every fault hath some penal effects which are coetaneous to the act, yet this of Infamy is not so: this is a more remote consequent; that which is immediately depends upon, is the publishing. A man may do things which to God and his own conscience render him abominable, and yet keep his reputation with men: but when this stifled crime breaks out, when his secret guilts are detected, then, and not till then, he becomes infamous: so that altho his sin be  
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the Material, yet it is the discovery that is the Formal cause of his Infamy.

3. THIS being granted, it follows that he that divulges an unknown concealed fault, stands accountable for all the consequences that flow from that divulging; but whether accountable as for guilt, must be determin'd by the particular circumstances of the cause. So that here we must admit of an exception: for tho every discovery of anothers fault be in the strict natural sense of the word a Detraction, yet it will not alwaies be the sin of Detraction, because in some instances there may some higher obligation intervene, and supersede that we ow to the fame of our neighbor; and in those cases it may not only be lawful, but necessary to expose him.

4 Now all such cases I conceive may summarily be reduced to two heads, Justice and Charity. First as to Justice: that we know is a fundamental vertue, and he that shall violate that, to abound in another, is as absurd, as he that undermines the foundation to raise the walls. We are not to steal to give alms, and God himself has declared that he hates robbery for a burnt-offering: so that no pretence

pretence either of Charity or Piety can absolve us from the duty we owe to Justice. Now it may often fall out, that by concealing one mans fault, I may be injurious to another, nay to a whole community: and then I assume the guilt I conceal, and by the Laws both of God and Man am judged an accessory.

5. AND as justice to others enforces, so sometimes Justice to a mans self allows the publishing of a fault, when a considerable interest either of fame or fortune cannot otherwise be rescued. But to make loud outcries of injury, when they tend nothing to the redress of it, is a liberty rather assumed by rage and impatience, then authorized by Justice. Nay often in that case the complainer is the most injurious Person; for he inflicts more than he suffers, and in lieu of some trivial right of his which is invaded, he assaults the other in a nearer interest, by wounding him in his good name: but if the cause be considerable and the manner regular, there lies sure no obligation upon any man to wrong himself, to indulge to another.

6. NEITHER do's Charity retrench  
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this liberty: for tho it be one act of Charity to concele another mans faults, yet sometimes it may be inconsistent with some more important Charity, which I own to a third Person, or perhaps to a Multitude; as in those cases wherein public benefit is concern'd. If this were not allowable, no History could lawfully be written, since if true, it cannot but recount the faults of many: no evidence could be brought in against a Malefactor: and indeed all discipline would be subverted; which would be so great a mischief, that Charity obliges to prevent it, what Defamation soever fall upon the guilty by it. For in such instances 'tis a true rule, that mercy to the evil proves cruelty to the innocent. And as in a competition of mischiefs we are to chuse the least, so of two goods the greatest, and the more extensive, is the most eligible.

7. NAY even that Charity which reflects upon my self, may also sometimes supersede that to my neighbor, the rule obliging me to love him as, not better then my self. I need not sure silently assent to my own unjust Defamation for fear of proving another a false accuser,

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nor suffer my self to be made a begger, to conceale another mans being a thief. 'Tis true in a great inequality of interests, Charity (whose Character it is, *Not to seek her own* 1. Cor. 13. 5.) will prompt me to prefer a greater concern of my neighbors before a slight one of my own: but in equal circumstances I am sure at liberty to be kind first to my self. If I will recede even from that, I may; but that is then to be accounted among the Heroic flights of Charity, not her binding and indispenfible Laws.

8. HAVING now set the boundaries to the excepted cases; as all instances within them will be legitimated, so all without them will (by the known rule of exceptions) be precluded, and fall under that general duty we owe to our neighbor, of tendering his credit: an obligation so Universally infringed, that 'tis not imaginable the breach should alwaies happen within the excepted cases. When 'tis remembred how unactive the principles of Justice and Charity are now grown in the world, we must certainly impute such incessant effects, to some more vigorous causes: of which it  
may

may not be amiss to point out some of the most obvious, and leave every man to examine which of them he finds most operative in himself.

9. IN the first place I may reckon *Pride*, a humor which as it is alwaies mounting, so it will make use of any foot-stool towards it rise. A man who affects an extraordinary splendor of reputation, is glad to find any foils to set him of; and therefore will let no fault nor folly of anothers enjoy the shade, but brings it into the open light, that by that comparifon his own excellences may appear the brighter. I dare appeal to the breast of any proud man, whether he do not upon such occasions, delight to make some Pharisaical reflections on himself, whether he be not apt to say, *I am not like other men, or as this Publican*, Luke 18. tho probably he leave out the *God I thank thee*. Now he that cherishes such resentments as these in himself, will doubtless be willing to propagate them to other men; and to that end render the blemishes of others as visible as he can. But this betraies a degenerate spirit, which from a consciousness that he wants solid worth, on which to

bottom a reputation, is fain to found it on the ruines of other mens. The true Diamond sparkles even in the sunshine: 'tis but a glow-worm vertue, that owes its luster to the darkness about it.

10. ANOTHER promter to Detraction is *Envy*, which sometimes is particular, sometimes general. He that has a pique to another, would have him as hateful to all mankind as he is to him; and therefore as he grieves and repines at any thing that may advance his estimation, so he exults and triumphs when any thing occurs which may depress it; and is usually very industrious to improve the opportunity, nay has a strange sagacity in hunting it out. No vulture do's more quickly scent a carcass; then an envious Person do's those *dead flies* which corrupt his neighbors ointment, Eccles. 10. 1. the vapor whereof his hate, like a strong wind, scatters and disperfes far and near. Nor needs he any great crime to practice on: every little infirmity or passion, lookt on thro his Optics, appears a mountainous guilt. He can improve the least speck or freckle into a leprosy, which shall overspread the whole man: and a cloud no bigger



ger than a mans hand like that of *Elisha*, 1 Kings 18. 44. may in an instant, with the help of prejudice, grow to the utter darkning of the brightest reputation, and fill the whole horizon with tempest and horror. Sometimes this Envy is general, not confin'd to any man person, but diffused to the whole nature. Some tempers there are so malign, that they wish ill to all, and believe ill of all; like *Timon* the Athenian, who profess himself an universal man-hater. His whole guilty conscience reflects dismal images of himself; is willing to put the same ugly shape upon the whole nature, and to conclude that all men are the same, were they but closely inspected. And therefore when he can see but the least glimmering of a fault in any, he takes it as a proof of his Hypothesis, and with an envious joy calls in as many spectators as he can. 'Tis certain there are some in whose ears nothing sounds so harsh as the commendation of another, as on the contrary nothing is so melodious as a Defamation. *Plutarch* gives an apt instance of this upon *Aristides*'s banishment, whom when a mean Person had propos'd to ostracism, being ask'd what

what displeasure *Aristides* had don him, he replied, *None, neither do I know him, but it grieves me to hear every body call him a just man.* I fear some of our keenest accusers now a daies may give the same answer. No man that is eminent for Piety (or indeed but moral vertue) but he shall have many insidious eies upon him *watching for his balking*; and if any the least obliquity can be espied, he is used worse then the vilest malefactor: for such are tried but at one bar, and know the utmost of their doom; but these are arraigned at every Table, in every Tavern, And at such variety of Judicatures, there will be as great variety of sentences; only they commonly concur in this one, that he is an Hypocrite, and then what complacency, what triumph have they in such a discovery? There is not half so much Epicurism in any of their most studied luxuries, no spectacle affords them so much pleasure, as a bleeding fame thus lying at their mercy.

II. ANOTHER sort of Detractors there are, whose designes are not so black, but are equally mean and sordid, much too light to be put in balance with a neighbors  
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Credit. Of those some will pick up all the little stories they can get, to humor a Patron: an artifice well known by those trencher guests, who, like Rats, still haunt the best Provisions. These men do almost come up to a literal sense of what the *Psalmist* spoke in a figurative, Psalm. 14. *and eat up people for bread*, tear and worry men in their good names, that themselves may eat. It was a Curse denounced against *Elis* off-spring, *that they should come and crouch for a morsel of bread* 1 Sam. 2. 39. But such men court this as a preferment, and to bring themselves within the reach of it stick not to assume that vilest office of common Delators. There are others who when they have got the knowledg of another mans fault, think it an endearing think to whisper it in the ear of some friend or confidant. But sure if they must needs sacrifice some secret to their friendship, they should take *Dauids* rule, and *not offer that which cost them nothing*. If they will express their confidence, let them acquaint them with their own private crimes. That indeed would show something of trust: but these experiments  
upon,

upon another mans cost, will hardly convince any considering Person of their kindness.

12. THERE still remains a yet more trifling sort of Defamers, who have no deliberate design which they pursue in it, yet are as assiduous at the Trade as the deeper contrivers. Such are those who publish their neighbors failings as they read Gazets, only that they may be telling News: an itch wherewith some peoples tongues are strangely over-run, who can as well hold a glowing Coal in their mouths, as keep any thing they think New; nay will sometimes run themselves out of breath, for fear least any should serve them as *Abimaaz* did *Cushi* 2. Sam; 18. 23. and tell the tale before them: This is one of the most Childish vanities imaginable: and sure men must have Souls of a very low level; that can think it a commensurate entertainment. Others there are who use Defamatory discourse, neither for the love of News, nor Defamation, but purely for love of talk: whose speech like a flowing current bears away indiscriminately whatever lies in its way: And indeed such incessant talkers, are usually  
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people, nor of depth enough to supply themselves out of their own store, and therefore can let no foreign accession pass by them; no more then the Mill which is alwaies going, can afford any waters to run wast. I know we use to call this Talkativeness a Feminine vice; but to speak impartially, I think, tho we have given them the inclosure of the Scandal, they have not of the fault, and he that shall appropriate Loquacity to Women, may perhaps sometimes need to light *Diogenes's* Candle to seek a man: for 'tis possible to go into Masculine company, where 'twill be as hard to sing in a word, as at a Female Gossiping. However as to this particular of Defaming, both the Sexes seem to be equally vices, and I think he were a very Critical Judge, that could determine between them. No doubt but this later sort of Defamers should be apt to absolve themselves, as men of harmless intentions, I shall desire them to consider, that they are only more impertinent, not less injurious. For tho it be granted, that the proud and envious are to make a distinct account for their pride  
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and envy; yet as far as relates to the neighbor, they are equally mischievous. *Anacreon* that was choaked with a grape-stone, died as surely as *Julius Cæsar* with his Rome and twenty wounds; and a mans reputation may be as well fool'd and prattled away, as maliciously betrayed. Nay perhaps more easily; for where the speaker can least be suspected of design, the hearer is apt to give him Credit: this way of insinuating by familiar discourse, being like those poisons that are taken in at the pores, which are the most insensibly sucked in, and the most impossible to expell. *14.* But we need not dispute which is worst; since tis certain all are bad; none of them (nor any that hold proportion with them) being at all able to pretend their warrant either from Justice or Charity. And then when our Savior saies in another place, will be applicable to this. *He that is not for us is against us*, *Mat. 12. 30.* He that in justifying his neighbors faults, acts more upon the dictates of Justice or Charity, acts directly in contradiction to them; for where they do not upon some particular respects command, they do implicitly

explicitly and generally forbid all such discoveries.

15. **F O R** first if a fault divulged be of a light nature, the offender cannot thereby merit so much, as to be made a public discourse. Fame is a tender thing, and seldom is tost and bandied without receiving some bruise, if not a crack: for reports we know like snow-balls gather still the farther they roul: and when I have once handed it to another, how know I how he may improve it? And if he deliver it so advanced to a third, he may give his contribution also to it, and so in a successive transmitting, it may grow to such a monstrous bulk, as bears no proportion to its Original. He must be a great stranger to the world, that has not experimentally found the truth of this. How many persons have lain under great and heavy scandals, which have taken their first rise only from some inadvertence or indiscretion? Of so quick a growth is Slander, that the least grain, like that of mustard seed, mentioned Mat. 13. 32. immediatly shoots up into a tree. And when it is so, it can no more be reduced back into its first cause,

then a tree can shrink into that little seed from whence it first sprang. No ruins are so irreparable as those of reputation: and therefore he that pulls out but one stone towards the breach, may do a greater mischief then perhaps he intends; and a greater injustice too: for by how much the more strictly Justice obliges to reparation in case of injuries don, so much the more severely do's it prohibit the doing those injuries which are incapable of being repaired. In the Levitical Law he that knew his ox was apt to gore, and yet kept him not up, stood responsible for any mischief he happened to do, Exod. 21. 29. I think there is no considering man can be ignorant how apt little trivial accusations are to tear and mangle ones fame: and yet if the lavish talker restrain them not, he certainly stands accountable to God, his Neighbor, and his own Conscience, for all the danger they procure.

16. B u T if the report concern some higher and enormous crime, 'tis true the delinquent may deserve the less pity, yet perhaps the reporter may not deserve the less blame: for often such a  
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discovery serves, not to reclame but to enrage the offender, and precipitate him into farther degrees of ill. Modesty and fear of shame, is one of those natural restraints which the wisdom of God has put upon mankind, and he that once stumbles, may yet by a check of that bridle recover again: but when by a public detection he is fallen under that infamy he fear'd, he will then be apt to discard all caution, and to think he ow's himself the utmost pleasures of his vice, as the price of his reputation. Nay perhaps he advances farther, and sets up for a reverse sort of Fame, by being eminently wicked: and he who before was but a Clandestine disciple, becomes a Doctor of impiety. And sure it were better to let a concealed crime remain in its wisht obscuriy, then by thus rouzing it from its covert, bring it to stand at bay, and set it self in this open defiance; especially in this degenerous age, when vice has so many well willers, that, like a hoping party, they eagerly run into any that will head them.

17. AND this brings in a third consideration relating to the public, to which the divulging of private (especially if they

they be novel unusual ) crimes , do's but an ill piece of service. Vice is contagious , and casts pestilential vapors and as he that should bring out a plague-sick Person , to inform the world of his disease , would be thought not to have much befriended his neighborhood ; so he that displays these vicious Ulcers , whilst he seeks to defame one , may perhaps infect many. We too experimentally find the force of ill examples. Men often take up sins , to which they have no natural propension , merely by way of conformity and imitation. But if the instance happen in a crime , which more suits the practice of the hearers , tho it cannot be said to seduce , yet it may encourage and confirm them , embolden them not only the more frequently to act , but even to avow those sins wherein they find they stand not single , and by discovering a new accessory to their Party , to invite them the more heartily and openly to espouse it.

18. THESE are such effects as surely do not very well correspond with that Justice and Charity we ow either to particular Persons , or to mankind in General. And indeed no better can be expected ,  
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from a practice which so perfectly contradicts the grand rule both of Justice and Charity, the doing as we would be done to. That this do's so, every man has a ready conviction within him, if he please but to consult his own heart. Alas with what solicitude do we seek to hide our own guilts with false dresses, what varnishes have we for them? There are not more arts of disguising our Corporal blemishes, then our Moral; and yet whilst we thus paint and parge our own deformities, we cannot allow any the least imperfection of another to remain undetected, but tear off the veil from their blushing frailties, and not only expose but proclaim them. And can there be a grosser, a more detestable partiality then this? God may, sure in this instance (as in many others), expostulate with us as he did with Israel, Ezek. 33. *Are not your ways unequal?* What Barbarism, what inhumanity is it thus to treat those of the same common nature with ourselves, whom we cannot but know have the same concern to preserve a Reputation, and the same regret to lose it, which we have? And what shame is it, that this Evangelical precept

precept, of doing as we would be don to, which met with so much reverence even from Heathens, that *Severus* the Emperor prefer'd it to all the Maxims of Philosophers; should be thus contemned and violated by Christians, and that too upon such slight inconsiderable motives as usually prevail in this case of Defamation?

19. But we are not to consider this fault only in its root as it is a defect of Justice and Charity, but in its product too, as it is a Seminary of more injustice and Uncharitableness. Those disadvantageous reports we make of our neighbors are almost sent to come round for no man perswade himself that his hearers will keep his counsel any better than He do's that of the defamed Person. The softest whisper of this kind, will find others to Echo, till it reach the ears of the concerned Party, and perhaps with some enhancing circumstances too. And when it is consider'd how unwilling men are to hear of their faults, tho' even in the mildest and most charitable way of admonition, 'tis not to be doubted a public Defamation will seem disobliging enough to provoke a return; which

which again begets a rejoinder, and so the quarrel is carried on with mutual recriminations; all malicious inquiries are made into each others manners, and those things which perhaps they did in closets, come to be proclaimed upon the house top: so the wild-fire runs round, till sometimes nothing but blood will quench it; or if it arrive not to that, yet it usually fixes in irreconcilable feud. To this is often owing those distances we see among friends and relations; this breeds such estrangements, such animosities amongst neighbors, that you cannot go to one, but you shall be entertained with invectives against the other; nay perhaps you shall lose both, because you are willing to side with neither.

20. THESE are the usual consequences of the liberty of the Tongue: and what account can any man give to himself, either in Christianity or prudence, that has let in such a train of mischiefs, merely to gratify an impotent childish humor of telling a tale? Peace was the great Legacy Christ left to his followers, and ought to be guarded, tho we expose for it our greatest temporal concerns,

but cannot without despight to him, as well as our brethren, be thus prostituted.

21. YET if we consider it abstractedly from those more solemn mischiefs which attend it, the mere levity and unworthiness of it sets it below an ingenious Person. We generally think a ratler and busy-body a title of no small reproch: yet truly I know not to whom it more justly belongs, then to those, who busy themselves first in learning, and then in publishing the faults of others: an employment which the Apostle thought a blot, even upon the weaker sex, and thinks the prevention of such importance, that he prescribes them to change their whole condition of life; to convert widow-hood (tho a state which in other respects he much prefers, 1 Cor. 7. 8.) into marriage, rather then expose themselves to the temptation, 1 Tim. 5. 13. 14. And if their impotence cannot afford excuse for it, what a debasement is it of mens nobler faculties to be thus entertain'd? The Historian gives it as an ill indication of *Domitians* temper, that he employ'd himself in catching and tormenting Flies: and sure they  
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fall not under a much better character, either for wisdom, or good nature, who thus snatch up all the little fluttering reports, they can meet with to the prejudice of their neighbors.

22. BUT besides the divulging the faults of others, there is another branch of Detraction naturally springing from this root, and this is censuring and severe judging of them. We think not we have well plai'd the Historians, when we have told the thing, unless we add also our remarks; and animadversions on it. And altho'tis, God knows, bad enough to make a naked relation, and trust it to the severity of the hearers; yet few can content themselves with that, but must give them a sample of rigor, and by the bitterness of their own censure invite them to pass the like: a process contrary to all rules of Law or equity, for the Plaintiff to assume the part of a Judg. And we may easily divine the fate of that mans fame, that is so unduly tried.

23. 'Tis indeed sad to see how many private tribunals are every where set up, where we scan and Judg our neighbor's action, but scarce ever acquit any.

We take up with the most incompetent witnesses, nay often suborn our own surmises and jealousies, that we may be sure to cast the unhappy Criminal. How nicely and scrupulously do we examine every circumstance; (Would God we were but half as exact in our own penitential inquisitions) and torture it to make it confess something which appears not in the more general view of the fact, and which perhaps never was in the actors intention? In a word we do like witches with their Magical Chymistry, extract all the venem, and take none of the allay. By this means we confound the degrees of sins, and sentence deliberate and indeliberate, an habit or an act all at one rate, that is commonly, at the utmost it can amount to, even in its worse acceptation: and sure this were a most culpable corruption in judgment, could we shew our commission to judg our brethren.

24. But here we may every one of us interrogate our selves in our Savior's words, *Who made me a Judg?* Luke 12.

14. And if he disclam'd it, who in respect of his Divinity had the Supreme right, and that too in a case wherein  
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one (at least) of the Litigants had desired his interposition, what a boldness is it in us to assume it, where no such appeal is made to us, but on the contrary the party disowns our Authority? Nay (which is infinitely more) 'tis superseded by our great Law-giver, in that express prohibition, Mat. 7. r. *Judge not*, and that back'd with a severe penalty, *that ye be not judged*? As God hath appropriated vengeance to himself, so has he Judicature also; and 'tis an invasion of his peculiar, for any (but his Delegates the lawful Magistrates) to pretend to either. And indeed in all private Judgment, so much depends upon the intention of the Offender, that unless we could possess our selves of Gods Omniscience, 'twill be as irrational as impious to assume his Authority. Until we know mens hearts, we are at the best but imperfect Judges of their actions. At our rate of judging St. Paul had surely pass'd for a most malicious Persecutor, whereas God saw he *did ignorantly in unbelief*, and upon that intuition had *mercy on him*, 1. Tim. 1. 13. 'Tis therefore good counsel which the Apostle gives, 1. Cor. 4. 51 *Judge nothing*

*nothing before the time until the Lord come.* For tho' 'tis said *the Saints shall judg the World*, 1. Cor. 6. 3, yet it must be at the great assize, and he that will needs intrude himself into the office before the time, will be in danger to be rather Passive then Active in the Judicatory. I do not here advise to such a stupid charity as shall make no distinction of Actions. I know there is a wo pronounced as well to those who *call evil good; as good evil*. Surely, when we see an open notorious sin committed, we may express a detestation of the Crime, tho not of the Actor; nay it may sometimes be a necessary Charity, both to the Offender, and to the innocent Spectators, as an Amulet to keep them from the Contagion of the Example. But still even in these cases, our Sentence must not exceed the evidence, we must judg only according to the visible undoubted circumstances, and not aggravate the crime upon presumptions and conjectures; if we do, how right soever our guessees may be, our judgment is not, but we are as St. James speaks, *Judges of evil thoughts*, Chap. 2. 4.

25. INDEED this rash judging  
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is not only very unjust both to God and man, but it is an act of the greatest pride. When we set our selves in the tribunal, we alwaies look down with content on those at the bar. And certainly there is nothing do's so gratify, so regale a haughty humor, as this piece of usurpt Sovereignty over our brethren: but the more it do's so, the greater necessity there is to abstain from it. Pride is a hardy kind of vice, that will live upon the barest pasture: you cannot starve it with the most industrious mortifications: how little need is there then of pampering and heightning it, which we cannot more effectually do, then by this censorious humor? for by that we are so perpetually employ'd abroad, that we have no leisure to look homeward, and see our own defects. We are like the inhabitants of *Is-rahel* & so eager upon the pursuit of others, that we leave our selves expos'd to the ambushes of *Satan*, who will be sure still to encourage us in our chase, draw us still farther and farther from our selves, and cares not how zealous we are in fighting against the crimes of others, so he can but keep that zeal from recoiling upon our own.

26. LASTLY this judging others is one of the highest violations of Charity. The Apostle gives it as one of the properties of that grace, that *it thinks no evil* (i. e.) is not apt to make severe constructions, but sets every thing in the fairest light, puts the most candid interpretations that the matter will bear. And truly this is of great importance to the reputation of our neighbors. The world we know is in many instances extremely governed by opinion; but in this 'tis all in all; it has not only an influence upon it, but is that very thing: reputation being nothing but a fair opinion and estimation among others. Now this opinion is not always swayed by due motives; sometimes little accidents, and often fancy, and ofttest prepossession governs in it. So that many times he that puts the first ill Character, fixes the stamp which afterwards goes current in the world. The generality of people take up prejudices (as they do religions) upon trust: and of those that are more curious in inquiring into the grounds, there are not many who vary on the more charitable hand, or bring the common sentence to review, with intent to

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moderate but enhance it. Men are apt to think it some disparagement to their acuteness and invention, if they cannot say something as sharp upon the subject, as has been said before; and so 'tis the business of many to lay on more load, but of few to take off: and therefore he that passes the first condemnatory sentence, is like the incendiary in a popular tumult, who is chargeable with all those disorders to which he gave the first rise, tho' that free not his Abettors from their share of the guilt.

27. AND as this is very uncharitable in respect of the injury offer'd, so also is it in reflection on the grand rule of Charity. Can we pretend to love our neighbors as our selves, and yet shall our love to him have the quite contrary effects to that we bear our selves? Can self-love lessen our beam into a mote, and yet can our love to him magnify his mote into a beam? No certainly, true Charity is more sincere, do's not turn to us the reverse end of the perspective, to represent our own faults at a distance, and in the most diminutive size, and yet shuffle the other to us when we are to view his. No, these are Tricks of

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Legerdemain we read in another Schole, even in his whose stile is *the accuser of the brethren*. We know how frequently God protests against false weights and false measures. And sure 'tis not only in the shop or market that he abhors them, they are no less abominable in conversation than in traffic. To buy by one measure and sell by another, is not more unequal, then it is to have these differing standards for our own and our neighbors faults, that our own shall weigh, in the Prophet Jeremies Phrase, *lighter then vanity, yea nothing*, and yet his (tho really the lighter) shall prove Zacharies talent of lead. This is such a partiality, as consists not with common honesty, and can therefore never be reconciled with Christian Charity: and how demurely soever such men may pretend to sanctity, that interrogation of God presses hard upon them, *shall I count them pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights?* Mich. 6. 11. Such bitter invectives against others mens faults, and indulgence or palliation of their own, shews their zeal lies in their spleen, and that they consider not so much what is don, as who do's

do's it: and to such the sentence of the Apostle is very applicable, Rom. 2. 1. *Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest, for where in thou judgest another thou condemnest thy self, for thou that judgest doest the same thing.* But admit a man have not the very same guilts he censures in another, yet 'tis sure every man has some; and of what sort soever they be, he desires not they should be rigorously scan'd; and therefore by the rule of Charity, yea and Justice too, ought not to do that which he would not suffer. If he can find extenuations for his own crimes, he is in all reason to presume others may have so for theirs: the common frailty of our nature, as it is apt alike to betray us to faults, so it gives an equal share in the excuse; and therefore what I would have pass for the effect of impotency or inadvertence in my self, I can with no tolerable ingenuity give a worse name to in him.

28. We have now viewed both these branches of Detraction, seen both the sin and mischiefs of them; we may now join them together in a concluding observation, which is, that they are as im-

prudent as they are unchristian. It has bin received among the maxims of civil life, not unnecessarily to exasperate any body; to which agrees the advice of an ancient Philosopher, Speak not evil of thy neighbor, if thou dost thou shalt hear that which will not fail to trouble thee. There is no Person so inconsiderable; but may at some time or other do a displeasure: but in this of Defaming men need no harnessing, no preparation: every man has his weapons ready for a return: so that none can shoot these arrows, but they must expect they will revert with a rebounded force; not only to the violation of Christian Unity (as I have before observ'd) but to the Aggressors great secular detriment, both in fame, and oftentimes interest also. Revenge is sharp-sighted, and overlooks no opportunity of a retaliation; and that commonly not bounded as the Levitical ones were, *An eie for an eie, a tooth for a tooth*, Exod. 21. 24. no nor by the larger proportions of their restitutions *fourfold*, Exod. 22. 1. but extended to the utmost power of the inflictor. The examples are innumerable of men who have thus laid themselves open in their



their greatest concerns, and have let loose the hands as well as Tongues of others against them, merely because they would put no restraint upon their own: which is so great indiscretion, that to them we may well apply that of Solomon, *A fools mouth is his destruction; and his lips are the snare of his soul.* Prov. 18. 7.

29. AND now who can sufficiently wonder, that a practice that so thwarts our interest of both worlds, should come universally to prevail among us? Yet that it do's so, I may appeal to the consciences of most, and to the observation of all. What so common Topic of discourse is there, as this of Backbiting our neighbors? Come into company of all Ages, all Ranks, all Professions, this is the constant entertainment. And I doubt he that at night shall duly recollect the occurrences of the day, shall very rarely be able to say, he has spent it without hearing or speaking (perhaps both) somewhat of this kind. Nay even those who restrain themselves other liberties, are often apt to indulge to this: many who are so just to their neighbors property, that as Abraham once said, Gen. 14. 23. *they would not take*

take from him, even from a bred to a shoe latchet, are yet so inconsiderate of his Fame, as to find themselves discourse at the expence of that, tho infinitely a greater injury then the robbing of his Coffer: which shew's what false measures we are apt to take of things, and evinces that many of those, who have not only in general abjur'd the world in their baptism, but do in many instances seem to themselves (as well as others) to have gain'd a superiority over it, do yet in this undiscernably yield it the greatest ensign of Sovereignty, by permitting it to set the standards and estimates of things, and taking its customary Prescriptions for Laws: For what besides this unhappy servility to custom, can possibly reconcile men that own Christianity, to a practice so widely distant from it? 'Tis true those that profess themselves men of this world; who design only their portion in this life, may take it up as sometimes conducing (at least seemingly) to their end: but for those who propose higher hopes to themselves, and know that Charity is one of the main props to those hopes, how foolishly do they undermine themselves, when they thus  
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act against their principles, and that upon no other Authority, but that of popular usage? I know men are apt to excuse themselves upon their indignation against vice, and think that their zeal must as well acquit them for this violation of the second Table, as it once did Moses for the breaking both, Ex. 32. 19. But to such I may answer in Christs words, Luke 9. 55. *Ye know not what manner of spirit you are of.* Meekness and Charity are the Evangelical graces, which will most recommend and assimilate us to him, who was meek and lowly in heart. But after all this pretext of Zeal, I fear it is but a cheat we put on our selves, the Elder brothers raiment only to disguise the Supplanter. Gen. 27. Let men truly ransack their own breasts, and I doubt the best will find there is something of vanity which lies at the bottom, if it be not the positive sort mention'd before, of designing to illustrate my self by others blemishes, yet at least the negative, that I am unwilling to incur the contempt incident to those, who scruple at small sins. Besides I observe perhaps, that 'tis the common entertainment of the world, to defame  
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their neighbors, and if I strike not in upon the Theme, I shall have nothing to render me acceptable company; perhaps I shall be reproched as morose or dull, and my silence shall be construed to proceed not from the abundance of my Charity, but the defect of my Wit.

30. BUT sure they that can thus argue, do hereby give a more demonstrative proof of that defect. He whose wit is so precarious, that it must depend only upon the folly or vice of another, had best give over all pretence to it. He that has nothing of his own growth to set before his guests, had better make no invitations, then break down his neighbors inclosure, and feast them upon his plunder. Besides how pitiful an attestation of wit is it, to be able to make a disgraceful relation of another? No scolding woman but may set up such Trophies: and they that can value a man upon such an account, may prefer the Scarabes, who feed upon dung, and are remark'd by no other property, before the Bee that sucks flowers and returns hony.

31. BUT in the next place admit this restraint should certainly expose one to  
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that reproch ; methinks this should be no news to those who know the condition of Christianity is to take up the Cross: and sure it cannot weigh lighter then in this instance, What am I the worse if a vain Talkative Person think me too reserv'd ? Or if he, whose frolic levity is his disease, call me dull, because I vapor not out all my spirits into froth ? *Socrates* when inform'd of some derogating Speeches one had used of him behind his back, made only this facetious reply, Let him beat me too when I am absent. And he that gets not such an indifference to all the idle censures of men, will be disturb'd in all his civil transaction, as well as his Christian ; it being scarce possible to do any thing, but there will be descants made on it. And if a man will regard those winds, he must, as *Solomon* saies, *never sow*, Eccl. II. 4. He must suspend even the necessary actions of common life, if he will not venture them to the being misjudged by others.

32. B U T there is yet a farther consideration in this matter : for he that upon such a despicable motive will violate his duty in one particular, lets Sa-

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tan get a main point of him, and can with no good Logic deny to do it in others. Detraction is not the only sin in fashion: Profaneness, and Obscenity, and all sorts of Luxury are so too, and threaten no less reproch to those who scruple at them. Upon the same grounds therefore that he discards his Charity to his neighbor, he may also his Piety, his Modesty, his Temperance, and almost all other virtues. And to speak the truth, there is not a more fertile womb of sin, then this dread of ill mens reproch. Other corruptions must be gratifi'd with cost and industry, but in this the Devil hath no farther trouble then to laugh men out of their souls. So prolific a vice therefore had need be weeded out of mens hearts: for if it be allowed the least corner, if it be indulged too in this one instance, 'twill quickly spread it self farther.

33. YET after all, this fear of reproch is a mere fallacy, started to disguise a more real cause of fear: for the greater danger of reproch do's indeed lie on that other side. Common estimation puts an ill Character upon pragmatic meddling people. For tho the inquisi-  
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tiveness and curiosity of the hearer, may sometimes render such discourses grateful enough to him, yet it leaves in him no good impressions of the speaker. This is well observ'd by the Son of Sirach, Ecclus. 19. 8, 9. *Whether it be to friend or foe; talk not of other mens lives, and if thou canst without offence, revele them not, for he heard and observ'd thee, and when time cometh he will hate thee.* In a word all considering Persons will be ever upon their guard in such company, as foreseeing that they will talk no less freely of them, then they do of others before them. Nor can the commonness of the guilt obviate the censure; there being nothing more frequent then for men to accuse their own faults in other Persons. Vice is like a dark Lantern, which turns its bright side only to him that bears it, but looks blak and dismal in anothers hand; and in this particular none has so much reason to fear a Defamer, as those who are themselves such; for (besides the common prudential motive) their own consciousness gives them an inward alarm, and makes them look for a retribution in the same kind. Thus upon the whole matter we

see, there is no real temptation, even to our vanity, to comply with this uncharitable custom, we being sure to lose more repute by it than we can propose to our selves to gain. The being esteem'd an ill man will not be balanced by being thought pleasant, ingenuous company, were one sure to be so. But 'tis odds that will not be acquired by it neither, for the most assiduous talebearers and bitterest revilers are often half-witted people: there being nothing more frequently observed, than such mens aptness to speak evil of things they understand not, Jude v. 10.

34. O Let not then those that have repudiated the more inviting sins, shew themselves phyltr'd and bewitch'd by this, but instead of submitting to the ill example of others, set a good one to them, and endeavor to bring this unchristian custom out of fashion. I am sure if they do not, they will be more deeply chargeable than others: for the more command they have over their other corruption, the more do they witness against themselves. Their remissness and willing subjection to this, besides their example when ill, is more ensnaring than other mens, and is apt  
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to insinuate easy thoughts of the sin. Men are apt to think themselves safe while they follow one of noted piety, and the authority of his Person often leads them blindfold into his failings. Thus when *Peter* dissembled, *St Paul* tells us that the other *Jews and even Barnabas also was carried away with his dissimulation.* Galat. 2. 13. And I doubt not in this particular many are encouraged by the liberty they see even good men take. So that such have a more accumulative guilt, for they do not only commit, but patronize the fault: the consideration whereof has kept me I confess, longer upon this head than is proportionable to the brevity of the rest? but I think not longer than agrees to the importance of the subject.

35. AND now since we have consider'd the malignity of this sin of Detraction; and yet withall find that 'tis a sin, which as the Apostle speaks, *doth so easily beset us*, 'tis but a natural Corollary that we inforce our vigilance against it. And where the importance and difficulty are both so great, 'twill be a little necessary to consider what are the likeliest means, the most appropriate Antidote against

against this so dangerous, and yet so Epidemic a disease.

36. AND here the common rule of Physic is to be adverted to, viz. to examine the causes, that the remedies may be adapted to them. I shall therefore in the first place desire every man seriously to study his own constitution of mind, and observe what are his particular temptations to this sin of Detraction, whether any of those I have before mention'd, as Pride, Envy, Levity, &c. or any other which lies deeper, and is only discernible to his own inspection. Let him, I say, make the scrutiny, and then accordingly apply himself to correct the sin in its first principle. For as when there is an eruption of Humor in any part 'tis not cured merely by outward applications, but by such alterative Medicines as purify the blood; so this Leprosy of the Tongue will still spread farther, if it be not check'd in its Spring and source, by the mortifying of those corrupt inclinations, which feed and heighten it.

37. THIS is an inquisition I must leave to every mans own Conscience, which alone can testify by what impulses

pulses he acts. Yet as the Rabbins were wont to say, that in every Signal Judgment which befel the Jews, there was some grain of the Golden-calf; so I think I may venture to say, that in all Detraction, there is some mixture of Pride: and therefore I suppose, a Caution against that, will be so generally seasonable, that it may well lead the Van of all other advices in this matter. And here 'tis very observable, that God who has *made of one blood all Nations of the earth*, Act. 17. has so equally distributed all the most valuable privileges of Human nature, as if he design'd to preclude all insulting of one man over another. Neither has he only thus insinuated it by his Providence, but has enforced it by his commands. In the Levitical Law we find what a particular care he takes to moderate the rigor of Judicial correction, upon this very account, lest *thy Brother be despised in thine eies*, Deut. 25. 3. So unreasonable did he think it, that the crime or misery of one, should be the exultation of another. And *S. Paul* brands it as a great guilt of the *Corinthians*, that they upon the occasion of the incestuous Person

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*were puffed up, when they should have mourned*, 1. Cor. 5. 2. When we see a dead Corps, we are not apt to insult over it, or brag of our own health and vigor; but it rather damps us, and makes us reflect, that it may (we know not how soon) be our own condition. And certainly the spectacles of Spiritual mortality should have the same operation. We have the same principles of Corruption with our lapsed Brethren, and have nothing but Gods grace, to secure us from the same effects, and by these insulting reflections forfeit that too; for *he gives grace only to the humble*, Jam. 4. 6. St. Paul's advice therefore is very apposite to this case, Gal. 6. 1. *Brethren if a man be overtaken in a fault, restore such a one in the spirit of Meekness, considering thy self, least thou also be tempted.* In a word the faults of others ought to excite our pity towards them, our caution as to our selves, and our thankfulness to God, if he hath hitherto preserv'd us from the like, *For who made thee to differ from another?* 1. Cor. 4. 7. But if we spread our Sails and triumph over these wrecks, we expose our selves to worse. Other sins like Rocks may split us, yet

yet the lading may be preserv'd: but Pride like a Gulf swallows us up; our very vertues when so leavened, becoming weights and plummets to sink us to the deeper ruine. The counsel therefore of the Apostle, is very pertinent to this matter. Rom. 11. 20. *Be not high minded, but fear.*

38. BUT God knows we can insult over others when we are not only under a possibility, but are actually involv'd in the same guilt: and then what are all our accusations and bitter censures of others, but indictments and condemnatory sentences against our selves? And we may justly expect God should take us at our word, and reply upon us as the Prophet did upon *David*, *Thou art the man.* 2 Sam. 12. 7. For tho our officious vehemence against anothers crime, may blind the eies of men, yet God is not so mocked, As therefore when a thief or murderer is detected, it gives an alarm to the whole confederacy; so when we find our own guilts pursued in other mens Persons, 'tis not a time for us to join in the prosecution, but rather by humble and penitent reflections on our selves to provide for our own safety.

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When therefore we find our selves (upon any misdemeanor of our brother) ready to mount the tribunal, and pronounce our sentence, let us first consider how competent we are for the office, calling to mind the decision Christ once made in the like case, *He that is without sin let him first cast a stone*, Joh. 8. 7. And if we did this, many perhaps of our fiercest impeachers, would think fit to retire and leave the delinquent (as they themselves finally desire to be) to the merciful indulgence of a Savior. In short, would we but look into our own hearts, we should find so much work for our inquisitions and censure, that we should not be at leisure to ramble abroad for it. And therefore as *Lycurgus* once said to one, who importun'd him to establish a popular parity in the state, Do thou, saies he, begin it first in thine own family: so I shall advise those that will be judging, to practice first at home. And if they will confine themselves to that, till there be nothing left to correct, I doubt not their neighbor will be well enough secur'd against their Detractions.

39. ANOTHER preservation against that

that sin is the frequent contemplation of the last and great judgment. This is indeed a Catholicon against all: but we find it particularly appli'd by St. *Paul* to this of judging and despising our Brethren; *Why dost thou judg thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? We shall all stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ.* Rom. 14. 10. That is the great day of Revelation and retribution, and we are not to anticipate it by our private inquests or sentences: we have business enough to provide our own accounts against that day. And as it were a spiteful folly for Malefactors that were going together to the bar, to spend their time in exaggerating each others crimes; so surely is it for us, who are all going toward the dreadful tribunal, to be drawing up Charges against one another. And who knows but we may then meet with the fate of *Daniels* accusers, see him we censur'd acquit, and our selves doomed. The penitence of the criminal may have numbred him among the Saints, when our unretracted uncharitableness may send us to unquenchable Flames. I conclude this consideration with the words of St. *James*, *There is one*

*Lawgiver who is able to save and to destroy, who art thou that judgest another? Jam.*

4. 12.

40. A third expedient may be, to try to make a revulsion of the humor, to draw it into another chanel. If we must needs be talking of other peoples faults, let it not be to defame, but to amend them, by converting our Detraction and backbiting into Admonition and fraternal correption. This is a way to extract medecine out of the viper, to consecrate even this so unhallow'd a part of our temper, and to turn the ungrateful meddling of a busy-body, into the most obliging office of a friend. And indeed had we that zeal for vertue, which we pretend when we inveigh against vice, we should surely lay it out this way, for this only gives a possibility of reforming the offender. But alas we order the matter so, as if we fear'd to lose the occasion of Clamor, and will tell all the world but him that it most concerns. Indeed 'tis a deplorable thing to see how universally this necessary Christian duty is neglected; and to that neglect we may in a great degree impute that strange overflowing of Detraction

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among us. We know the receiving any thing into our Charge, insensibly begets a love and tenderness to it (a nurse upon this account comes often to vie kindness with the mother: ) and would we but take one another thus into our care, and by friendly vigilance thus watch over each others souls, 'tis scarce imaginable what an endearment it would create: such certainly as would infallibly supplant all our unkind reportings, and severe descants upon our brethren; since those can never take place, but when there is at least an indifference, if not an enmity.

41. THE next cure I shall propose for Detraction, is to substract its nourishment, by suppressing all Curiosity and inquisitiveness concerning others. Were all supplies thus cut off, it would at last be subdued. The King of Ethiopia in a vie of Wit with the King of Egypt, propos'd it as a Problem to him, to drink up the Sea, to which he repli'd, by requiring him first to stop the access of Rivers to it: and he that would drain this other Ocean, must take the same course, dam up the avenues of those Springs which feed it. He  
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that is alwaies upon the scent, hunting out some discovery of others, will be very apt to invite his neighbors to the quarry; and therefore 'twill be necessary for him, to restrain himself from that range: not like jealous States, to keep Spies and pensioners abroad to bring him intelligence, but rather discourage all such officious pick-thanks: for the fuller he is of such informations, the more is his pain if he keep them in, and his guilt if he publish them. Could men be perswaded to affect a wholesome ignorance in these matters, it would conduce both to their ease and innocence: for 'tis this Itch of the ear which breaks out at the Tongue: and were not Curiosity the Purveior, Detraction would soon be starved into a tameness.

42. BUT the most infallible receipt of all, is the frequent recollecting, and serious applying of the grand rule, of doing as we would be don to: for as Detraction is the violation of that, so the observation of that must certainly supplant Detraction. Let us therefore when we find the humor fermenting within us, and ready to break out in Declamations against our brethren, Let us,

us, I say, check it with this short question, Would I my self be thus us'd? This voice from within, will be like that from heaven to St. Paul, which stopt him in the height of his carrier, Act. 9. 4. And this voice every man may hear, that will not stop his ears, nor gag his conscience, it being but the Echo of that native Justice and equity which is planted in our hearts: and when we have our remedy so near us, and will not use it, God may well expostulate with us, as he did with the Jews, *Why will ye die, O house of Israel?* Ezek. 33. 11.

43. THESE are some of those many receipts which may be prescrib'd against this spreading disease. But indeed there is not so much need to multiply remedies, as to perswade men to apply them. We are in love with our Malady, and as loth to be cured of the Luxury of the Tongue, as S. *Augustine* was of his other Sensuality, against which he praied with a Caveat, that he might not be too soon heard. But 'tis ill dallying, where our Souls are concern'd: for alas 'tis they that are wounded by those darts, which we throw at others. We take our aim perhaps at our Neighbors, but indeed hit  
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our selves: herein verifying in the highest Sense that Axiom of the Wise-man, *He that diggeth a pit, shall fall into it, and he that rolet a stone, it shall return upon him.* Prov. 25. 27. If therefore we have no tenderness, no relenting to our Brethren, yet let us have some to our selves; so much compassion, nay so much respect to our precious immortal Souls, as not set them at so despicable a price, to put them in balance with the satisfying of a petulant peevish vanity. Surely the shewing our selves ill-natur'd (which is all the gain Detraction amounts to) is not so enamouring a design, that we should sacrifice to it our highest interest. 'Tis too much to spend our breath in such a pursuit; O let not our souls also exhale in the vapor; but let us rather pour them out in praiers for our brethren, then in accusations of them: for tho both the one and the other will return into our own bosoms, yet God knows to far differing purposes, even as differing as those wherewith we utter them. The Charity of the one like kindly exhalations will descend in showers of blessings, but the rigor and asperity of the other, in a severe doom upon our selves: for the A-  
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postle will tell us, *He shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy,* James 2. 13.

SECT. VII.

*Of Scoffing and Derision.*

THERE is also another fault of the Tongue injurious to our neighbor, and that is Derision and Mockery; and striving to render others as ridiculous and contemptible as we can. This in respect of the subject matter differs from the other of Detraction, as much as folly or deformity do's from vice: yet since injuries as well as benefits, are to be mesured by common estimation, this may come in balance with the other. There is such a general aversion in human nature to contempt, that there is scarce any thing more exasperating. I will not deny but the excess of the aversion may be level'd against Pride; yet sure scorn and disdain never sprung from humility, and therefore are

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very incompetent Correctors of the other; so that it may be said of that, as once it was of *Diogenes*, that he trampled on *Plato's* Pride with greater of his own.

2. NOR is this injury enhanced only by the resentment of the sufferer, but also by the way of inflicting it. We generally think those are the severest marks of infamy, which are the most indelible. To be burnt in the hand or pilloried, is a more lasting reproch then to be scourged or confined; and it is the same in this case, for here commonly Wit is the Lictor, which is arm'd with an edg'd tool, and leaves scars behind it. The reproch of rage and fury seem to be writ in Chalk or Lead; which a dispassionate hearer easily wipes out, but those of Wit are like the gravures burnt upon copper, or the corrodings of Aqua-fortis, which engrave and indent the Characters that they can never be defaced. The truth of this daily experience attests. A ball continually quickly vanishes; no body thinking it worth remembering, but when 'tis steel'd with Wit, it pierces deep, leaves such impressions in the fancy of the hearers, that thereby it gets rooting in the memory, and will

will scarce be eradicated: nay sometimes it happens to survive both speaker and hearer; and conveys it self to posterity; it being not unusual for the sarcasms of Wit to be transmitted in story. And as it thus gives an edge, so also do's it add wings to a reproch, makes it fly abroad in an instant. Many a poor mans infirmities had bin confined to the notice of a few relations or neighbors, had not some remarkable strein of drollery scatter'd and dispersed them. The jest recommends the Defamation, and is commonly so incorporate with it, that they cannot be related apart. And even those who like it not in one respect, yet are many times so transported with it in the other, that they chuse rather to propagate the contumely, then stifle the conceit. Indeed Wit is so much the *Diana* of this age, that he who goes about to set any bounds to it, must expect an *uproar*, Acts 19. 28. or at least to be judg'd to have imposed an envious inhibition on it, because himself has not stock enough to maintain the trade. But how ever sharp or unexpected the censure may seem to be, yet 'tis necessary that plain downright truth should sometimes

be spoken, and I think that will bear me out, if I say 'tis possible men may be as oppressive by their parts, as their power; and that God did no more design the meaner intellectualls of some for triumphs to the Pride and vanity of the more acute, then he did the possessions of the less powerful, as a prey to the rapine and avarice of the mighty.

3. AND this suggests a yet farther aggravation of this sin, as it is a perverting of Gods design, and abuse of the talent he has committed to men in trust. Ingenuity and quickness of parts, is sure to be reckoned in the highest ranks of Blessing, and an instrument proper for the most excellent purposes: and therefore we cannot suppose the Divine wisdom so much short of Human, as not in his intention to assign it to uses worthy of it. Those must relate either to God, our selves, or our neighbors. In respect of God, it renders us more capable of contemplating his Perfections, discerning the Equity and excellence of his Laws, and our obligations to obedience. In regard of our selves it makes us apprehend our own interest in that obedience; makes us tractable and per-



perswasible, contrary to that Brutish stubbornness of the Horse and Mule, which the Psalmist reproches, Psal. 32. 9. Besides it accommodates us in all the concerns of Human life, forms it self into all those useful contrivances, which may make our being here more comfortable; especially it renders a man company to himself, and in the greatest dearth of Society, entertains him with his own thoughts. Lastly, as to our neighbors, it renders us useful and assistant. All those discoveries and experiments, those Arts and Sciences, which are now the common treasure of the world, took their first rise from the ingenuity of particular persons: and in all Personal exigencies wherein any of us are at any time involved, we need not be told the usefulness of a wise adviser. Now all these are employments commensurable to the faculty from whence they flow, and that answer its excellence and value; and he that so bestows his talent, gives a good account of his trust. But I would fain know under which of these Heads Derision of our Neighbor comes in: certainly not under that of being assistant to him. It would be a sorry relief to a  
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poor indigent wretch, to lavish out wit upon him, in upbraiding of his misery. And is not this a parallel case? Is it not the same Barbarism, to mock and reproch a man that wants the gifts of Nature, as him that wants those of Fortune? Nay perhaps it may be more, for a Beggar may have impoverished himself by his own fault, but in Natural defects there is nothing to be charged, unless we will fly higher, and arraign that Providence that hath so dispensed. In a word as the Superfluities of the Rich are by God assign'd as the store-house of the poor, so the Abilities of the Wise are of the ignorant: for 'tis a great mistake, to think our selves Stewards in some of Gods gifts, and proprietaries in others. They are all equally to be employ'd, according to the designation of the Donor, and there is nothing more universally design'd by him, then that mankind should be equally helpful to one another. Those therefore whom God hath blest with higher degrees of sagacity and quickness, ought not to look down on others as the objects of their contempt or scorn, but rather of their care and pity, endeavoring to rescue them

them from those mischiefs, to which their weakness may expose them, remembering still, that God might have changed the Scene, and made themselves what they see others. It is part of *Jobs* justification of his integrity, that *he was eyes to the Blind, and feet to the Lame*, *Job 12. 25. (1. 25.)* he accommodated his assistances to all the wants and exigencies of others: and sure 'tis no less the part of a good man to do it in the Mental than in the Corporeal defects.

4. But alas many of us would rather put a stumbling block in the way of the Blind, pull away the Crutch from the Lame, that we may sport ourselves to see them tumble: such a sensuality we have in observing and improving the imperfections of others, that it is become the grand excellence of the Age to be Dextrous at it, and Wit serves some men for little else. We are got indeed into a merry world; Laughing is our main business; as if because it has bin made part of the Definition of man, that he is *Risible*, his man-hood consisted in nothing else. But alas if that be all the use men have of their understandings, they were given them to little purpose

pose, since mere Idiots can laugh with as much pleasure and more innocence than they; and it is a great instance how extremes may be brought to meet, that the excess of Wit in the one, and of Folly in the other, serve to produce the same effect.

5. YET so voracious is this humor now grown, that it draws in every thing to feed it. There is not game enough from the reall folly of the world, and therefore that which is the most distant from it must be stampt with its mark. 'Tis a known story of the Frier who on a fasting day bid his Capon be Carp, and then very Canonically ate it; and by such a transubstantiating power our Wits bid all seriousness and consideration be formality and foppery, and then under that name endeavor to hunt it out of the world. I fear moral honesty fares not better with some of them than moral prudence. The old Philosophical vertues of Justice, Temperance, and Chastity are now hist off the stage, as fit only for the Antiquated set of Actors, and he that appears in that equipage, is by many thought more ridiculous, then he that walks the street in his

his Ancestors trunk hose. Nay indeed vice it self is scarce secure if it have not the grand accomplishment of impudence: a puny blushing sinner is to be laugh't out of his Modesty, tho not out of his sin; and to be proof against their scorns he must first be so against all the regrets of his own mind.

6. AND if mere Ethnic virtue, or shamefaced vice have this treatment, Christian Piety must expect worse: and so indeed it finds, its professors being beyond all others expos'd to their scorn and contempt. Nor is it strange it should be so, such men being *made*, as it is Wisd. 2. 14. *to reprove their waies*; they think in their own defence they are to deride theirs. This is it indeed which gives a secret sting and venom to their reproches: other men they abuse as an exercise of their Wit, but these in defence of the party. So *Julian* after his Apostacy, thought it a more effectual way to persecute the Christians by taunts and ironies, then by racks and tortures, as thinking it more possible to shame, then fright them out of their religion. And the stratagem seems to have bin reassum'd by many in this age, and I

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fear with too great success: for I doubt not there are divers who have herded themselves amongst these profane Scoffers, not that they are convinced by their reasons, but terrified by their contumelies; and as some Indians are said to worship the Devil, that he may not hurt them; so these chuse to be active, that they may not be passive in the contemts flung upon religion: such men forget the dreadful denunciation of Christ against those that shall *be ashamed of him and his words*. Mat. 8. 38.

7. As for those who, upon a juster estimate, find the advantages of piety worthy to be chosen, and take it with all its necessary ignominies, they have the encouragement of very good company in their sufferings. The Psalmist long ago had his share, when not only *Those that sate in the gate spake against him, but the drunkards made songs upon him*, Psalm. 69. 12. 'Twas also the Prophet *Jeremies* complaint, *I am in Derision dayly; every one mocketh me*, Jer. 20. 7. Nay our blessed Lord himself was derided in his life by the Pharisees, Luke 16. 14. mocked and reviled at his death by the Priests, the Elders, the Sol-

Soldiers; nay by casual passengers, Mat. 27. 39. And shall the servant think himself greater than his Lord? Shall a Christian expect an immunity from what his Savior has born before him? (He that do's so, is too delicate a member for a crucified head.) No sure, let us rather animate our selves, as the Apostle exhorts, by *considering him who as well despised the shame, as endured the cross for us*, Heb. 12. 3. and who has not only given an example, but proposed a reward, a Beatitude to those who are *reviled for righteousness sake*, Mat. 3. 11. And when this is soberly ponder'd, 'twill sure make it easy for us to resolve with holy *David* in a like case, *I will be yet more vile*, 2 Sam. 6. 22.

8. But to return from this digression, to those who thus unhappily employ their parts, let me propose to them, that they would borrow every day some few minutes from their mirth; and seriously consider, whether this be (I need not say a Christian, but) a manly exercise of their faculties. Alas when they have rallied out the day from one company to another, they may sum up their account at night in the wise man's si-

mile, their *Laughter has bin but like the crackling of Thorns under a pot*, Ecclus. 6. 7. made a little brisk noise for the present, and with the sparkles perhaps annoied their Neighbors, but what real good has it brought to themselves? All that they can fancy is but the repute of Wit. But sure that might be attainable some other way. We find the world affected to new things, and this of Derision and abuse to others is so beaten a road, that perhaps the very variety of a new way would render it acceptable. They are the lighter substances that still swim away with the stream, the greater and more solid bodies do sometimes stop the current: and sure 'twere a noble essay of a mans parts to stem this tide, and by a more useful application of their own faculties, convince others that theirs might be better employed. 'Tis said of *Anacbarfis*, that at a feast he could not be got to smile at the affected railleries of common Jesters, but when an ape was brought in he freely laught, saying, an ape was ridiculous by nature, but men by art and study. And truly 'tis a great content of human nature to think their intellects were given them  
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for no better end then to raise that laughter, which a brute can do as well or better.

9. I would not be thought to recommend such a Stoical sourness, as shall admit of nothing of the cheerful pleasant part of Conversation. God has not sure bin more rigid to our Minds then to our Bodies: and as he has not so devoted the one to toil, but that he allows us some time to exercise them in recreation as well as labors, so doubtless he indulges the same relaxation to our Minds: which are not alwaies to be scrued up to the height, but allowed to descend to those easinesses of Converse, which entertain the lower Faculties of the Soul. Nor do I think those are ill employed in those little skirmishes of Wit, which pass familiarly between intimates and acquaintances, which besides the present divertisement, serve to whet and quicken the fancy. Yet I conceive this liberty is to be bounded with some Cautions: as first in these entercounters, the Charge should be Powder not Bullets; there should nothing be said that should leave any ungrateful impressions, or give any umbrage of a spiteful intent. The world  
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wants not experiments of the mischiefs have happened by too severe Railleries: in such Fencing jest has proved earnest, and Florets have oft turn'd to Swords, and not only the Friendship, but the Men have fallen a Sacrifice to a Jest.

19. SECONDLY this is to have the same restriction with all other recreations, that it be made a divertisement, not a trade. 'Tis an insinuating thing, and is apt to encroach too much upon our time, and God knows we have a great deal of business of this world, and much more for the next, which will not be done with laughing, and therefore 'tis not for us to play away too much of that time, which is exacted by more serious concerns. 'Tis sure we shall die in Earnest, and it will not become us to live altogether in Jest. But besides this stealth of our time, 'tis apt to steal away mens hearts too, make them so dote upon this kind of entertainment, that it averts them from any thing more serious. I believe I may appeal to some who have made this their business, whether it go not against the hair with them to set to any thing else: and having espoused this as their one excellence, they are willing to de-  
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cry all others, that they may the more value themselves upon this. By this means it is, that the gift of Raillery has in this Age, like the lean kine, devour'd all the more solid worthy qualifications; and is counted the most reputable accomplishment. A strange inverted estimate; thus to prefer the little ebullitions of Wit, before solid reason and judgment. If they would accommodate their Diet at the same rate, they shall eat the Husk, rather than the Kernel, and drink nothing but froth and bubbles. But after all, Wisdom is commonly at long running justified even of her Despisers; these great Idolaters of Wit often dashing themselves upon such Rocks, as make them too late wish, their Sables had bin less, and their Ballast more. For the preventing therefore of more such wracks, I wish the present caution may be more adverted to, not to bestow an unproportionable part of our time or value on this slight exercise of mans slightest Faculty.

II. A third Caution in this matter, is to confine our selves to present Company, not to make absent Persons the Subject of our mirth. Those freedoms we  
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use to a mans face as they are commonly more moderate, so they are more equitable, because we expose our selves to the like from him; but the back blowes are disingenuous, and give suspicion we intend not a fair trial of Wit, but a cowardly murder of a mans fame. 'Twas the precept of the Philosopher, *Deride not the absent*, and I think it may well be so of the Politician: there being nothing more imprudent as to our civil concerns then the contrary liberty. For those things never die in the company they are first vented in (nay perhaps the hearer is not willing his wit should so soon expire;) and when they once take air, they quickly come to the notice of the derided Person, and then nothing in the world is more disobliging. 'Twas a sober precept given once, not so much as to laugh in compliance with him that derides another, for you will be hated by him he derides. And if an accessary be hated, sure much more the principal: and I think I may say, there are many can sooner forgive a solemn deep contrivance against them, then one of their jocular reproches: for he that designs seems to acknowledg them considerable, but he that

that mocks them, seems to think them too low for any thing but contempt: and we learn from Aristotle, that the measure of anger is entirely taken thence; men being so far provoked; as they imagine they were slighted or affronted. In mere secular wisdom it will therefore become men to consider, whether this trade be like to turn to account, or whether it be worth the while, at once to make a jest and an enemy.

12. AND if it be imprudent to make man our enemy, 'tis much more to make God so; by levelling our blowes at any thing sacred: but of that I have already had occasion to speak, and shall not repeat; only give me leave to say, that besides the profaner sort of jests, which more immediately reflect on him, he is concern'd in all the unjust reproches of our brethren, our love to them being confirm'd by the same divine Sanction with our reverence to him: and sure nothing is more inconsistent with that love, then the exposing them to that contempt we are our selves so impatient of. In a word what repute soever this practice now has of Wit, it is very far from wisdom to provoke God that we may also disob-

lige man: and if we will take the Scripture estimate, we shall find a Scorners is no such honorable Epithet as we seem to account it. *Solomon* do's almost constantly set it in opposition to a Wise man: thus it is, Prov. 9. 8. and again Chap. 13. 1. and many other places; and on the other side, closely links it with the Fool: and that not only in title, but in punishment too, *Judgments are prepared for scorners, and stripes for the back of fools*, Prov. 19. 29. So that if our Wits think not *Solomon* too dull for their Cabal, we see what a turn he will give to their present verdict.

13. AND if these reproches which aim only at ostentation of Wit, be so unjustifiable, what shall we say to those, that are drawn with blacker lines, that are founded in Malice or Envy, or some undermining design? Every man that is to be supplanted cannot alwaies be attacked with a down-right battery: perhaps his integrity may be such, that, as 'twas said of *Daniel* Chap. 6. 4. *They can find no occasion against him*: and when they cannot shake the main Fort, they must try if they can possess themselves of the out-works, raise some prejudice

dice against his discretion, his humor, his carriage, and his most extrinsic adherents, and if by representing him ridiculous in any of these they can but abate mens reverence to him, their confidence of him will not long hold out; bare honesty without some other adornment, being lookt on as a leaf-less tree, no body will trust himself to its shelter. Thus the enemies of *Socrates*, when they could no other waies suppress his reputation, hired *Aristophanes* a Comic Poet to personate him on the stage, and by the insinuations of those interludes, insensibly conveyed first a contempt, and then a hatred of him into the hearts of the people. But I need not bring instances of former times in this matter, these being sufficiently verst in that mystery.

14. IT is not strange that men of such designs, should summon all their Wit to the service, make their Raileries as picquant as they can, that they may wound the deeper; but methinks 'tis but a mean office they assign their Wit, to be (I will not say the Pander, that being in this age scarce a title of reproch; but) the executioner or hangman to their malice. Christ bids us *be wise as Ser-*

*pents*, yet adds with all *harmless as Doves*; Mat. 10. 18. but here the Serpent has quite eat up the Dove, and puts a Vultur in the place, a creature of such sagacity and diligence in pursuit of the prey, that 'tis hard for any art or innocence to escape its talons.

15. THERE is yet another sort of Contumelious Persons, who indeed are not chargeable with that circumstance, of ill employing their Wit, for they use none in it. These are people whose sole talent is Pride and Scorn; who perhaps have attained the Sciences of dressing themselves finely and eating well, and upon the strength of those excellences, look fastidiously, and speak disdainfully on any who want them; concluding if a man fall short of their Garniture at the Knees and Elbowes, he is much inferior to them in the furniture of his Head. Such people think crying, *Oridiculous!* is an ample Confutation of any thing can be said; and so they can but despise enough, are contented not to be able to say why they do so. These are, I confess, the most innocent kind of Deriders in respect of others, what they say having not edg enough  
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to cause any smart. The greatest hurt they do is to themselves, who tho they much need, yet are generally little capable of a rescue, and therefore I shall not clog the present discourse with any advise to them: I shall chuse rather to conclude with enforcing my Suit to the former, that they would soberly and sadly weigh the account they must one Day give of the Employment of their Parts, and the more they have hitherto embeazled them, the more to endeavor to expiate that unthriftiness, by a more careful Managery for the future; that so instead of that vain, emty, vanishing Mirth they have courted here, they may find a real, full, and eternal Satisfaction in the Joy of their Lord.

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## SECT. VIII.

## Of Flattery.

1. **T**HE last of Verbal injuries to our Neighbor which I shall mention, is Flattery. This is indeed the fatallest wound of the Tongue, carries least Smart but infinitely more of Danger, and is as much superior to the former, as a Gangrene is to a Gall or Scratch; this may be sore and vexing, but that stupefying and deadly. Flattery is such a Mystery, such a Riddle of iniquity, that its very softnesses are its cruellest rigor, its Balm corrodes, and (to comprize all in the Psalmists excellent Description) *its words are smother then oil, and yet be they very swords.* Psalm, 56. 21.

2. **B**UT besides the mischiefs of it to the Patient, 'tis the most dishonoring, the most vilifying thing to the Agent. I shall not need to empannel a Jury either of Moralists or Divines, every  
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ry mans own breast sufficiently instructing him in the unworthiness of it. 'Tis indeed a Collective accumulative Baseness, it being in its Elements a compound and a complex of the most sordid, hateful qualities incident to Mankind. I shall instance in three, *viz.* Lying, Servility, and Trechery, which being detestably deform'd single, must in Conjunction make up a loathsome Monstrous guilt. Now tho Flattery has two Branches, yet these lie so at the Root as equal to influence both: for whether you take it as it is the giving of praise where it is not due, or the professing of kindness which is not real, these Properties are still its Constitutive parts.

3. AND first we may take Lying to be the very corner Stone of the Fabric; for take it away, and the Whole falls to the ground. A Parasite would make but a lean trade of it, that should confine himself to truth. For tho 'tis possible so to order the manner and circumstances, as to flatter even in the representing a mans real vertues to him, yet commonly if they do not falsify as to the kind, they are forc'd to do it as to the degree. Besides as there are  
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but few such subjects of Flattery, so neither are men of that Worth so receptive of it. Such sort of addresses are less dangerous to those who have the perspicacity to see thro them: so that these Merchants are under a necessity of dealing with the more ignorant Chapmen, and with them their counterfeit wares will go off best. It is indeed strange to consider with what gross impudent falshoods men of this trade will court their Patrons. How many in former ages have not only amass'd together all sublunary excellences, but have even ransacked heaven to supply their Flattery, Deified their Princes, and perswaded them they were Gods, who at last found they were to die like men? And tho this strein be now out-dated, yet perhaps tis not that the vice is grown more modest, but that Atheism has rob'd it of that Topic. Those that believe no God, would rather seem to annihilate then magnify the person to whom they should apply the title. But I do not find that the practice has any other bounds. A great mans vices shall still be called vertues; his deformities, beauties; and his most absurd follies, the height of ingenuity. Such a subtil

subtil Alchymist is his Parasite, that he turns all he touches into gold; imaginarily indeed as to the deluded Person, but oft-times real to himself. Nor is Lying less naturall to the other part of Flattery, the Profession of service and kindness. This needs no evidencing, and to attempt it would be a self-Confutation: for if those Professions be true, they are not Flattery, therefore if they be Flattery, they must needs be Lies. It will be almost as needless to expatiate on the Baseness and meanness of that sin; for tho there is no Subject that affords more matter for Declamation, yet Lying is a thing that is ashamed of it self, and therefore may well be remitted to its own convictions. 'Tis *Aristotles* observation, that all Elements but the Earth, had some Philosopher or other, that gave it his vote to be the first productive Principle of all things: and I think we may now say, that all Crimes have had their Abettors and fautors, some body that would stand up in their defence; only Lying is so much the dregs and refuse of wickedness, that none has yet had Chymistry enough to sublimate it, to bring it into such a reputation, that any man

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will think fit to own it: the greater wonder that what is under so universal a reproch, should be so commonly admitted in practice. But by this we may make an estimate, what the whole body of Flattery is, when in one limb of it we find so much corruption.

4. A Second is Servility and Abjectness of humor: and of this there needs no other proof then has bin already given; this charge being implicitly involv'd in the former of Lying, the condescending to that, being a mark of a disingenuous spirit. And accordingly the nobler Heathens lookt on it as the vice of Slaves and vassals, below the liberty of a free man, as well as an honest. But tho I need no other evidence to make good the accusation, yet every Sycophant furnishes me with many supernumerary proofs. Look upon such a one, and you shall see his eyes immoveably fixt on his Patrons face, watching each look, each glance, and in every change of his countenance (like a Star-gazer) reading his own destiny, his Ears chain'd (like gally-slaves at the oar) to his dictate, sucking in the most insipid discourses with as much greediness, as if they were the Apothegms of the

the seven sages, his Tongue tuned only to Panegyrics and acclamations, his feet in winged motion upon every nod or other signification of his pleasure: in a word, his whole body (as if had no other animal spirits then what it derived from him) varies its postures, its exercises, as he finds agreeable to the humor he is to serve. And can humanity contrive to debase it self more? Yes it can, and do's to often, by enslaving its Diviner part to, taking up not only opinions, but even crimes also in compliance, playing the incarnate Devil, and helping to act those villanies which Satan can only suggest; and if this be not a state of abject slavery, sure there is none in the world. *Plutarch* tells us, that *Philoxenus* for despising some dull Poetry of *Dionysius*, was by him condemned to dig in the quarries; from whence being by the mediation of friends remanded, at his return *Dionysius* produced some other of his verses, which as soon as *Philoxenus* had read, he made no reply, but calling to the waiters, said, *Let them carry me again to the quarries.* And if a heathen Poet could prefer a corporeal slavery before a mental, what name of

reproach is low enough for those, who can submit to both, in pursuit of those poor sordid advantages they project by their Flatteries. Nor is this baseness more observable in these mean fawnings and observances, than it is in the protestations of kindness and Friendship. Love is the greatest gift any man has to bestow, and Friendship the sacredest of all moral bonds: and to prostitute these to little pitiful designs, is sure one of the basest cheats we can put upon our common nature, in thus debasing this purest and most current coin, which by these frequent adulterations is become so suspected, that scarce any man knows what he receives. But Christian Charity is yet worse used in the case: for that obliging to all sincerity, is hereby induced to give gold for dross, exhibit that *Love indeed; and in truth,* which is returned only *in word and in Tongue*, 1. Joh. 3. 18. And so it do's in those who observe its rules: but in those who own, yet observe them not, is yet a greater sufferer, by laboring under the scandal of all their dissimulations. It was once the Character given Christians, even by their Enemies, *Behold how*



how they love one another: but God knows we may now be pointed out by a very differing mark, *Behold how they deceive and delude one another.* And sure this violation we herein offer to our religion, do's not allay ~~but~~ aggravate the baseness of this practice; for if in the other we sell out selves, in this we sell our God too; sacrifice our interest in him to get a surreptitious title to the favor of a man. And this I conceive do's in the second place not much commend the art of Flattery, which is build up of so vile materials. ~~And to compleat this infamous composition, in the third place~~ Flattery comes in; a crime of so odious a kind, that to name it is to implead it; yet how intrinsic a part this is of Flattery, will need no great skill to evidence, daily experience sufficiently doing it. 'Tis a common observation of Flatterers, that they are like the Heliotropes, open only towards the sun; but shut and contract themselves at night, and in cloudy weather. Let the object of their adoration be but eclipsed, they can see none of those excellences which before dazzled their eyes: and however inconstant they may

may seem in it to others, they are indeed very constant to themselves; true to their first principle, of courting the greatness not the man; in pursuit whereof their old Idol is often made a sacrifice to their new: all malicious discovery is made of their falling friend, to buy an interest in the rising one. Of this there are such crouds of examples in Story, that it would be impertinent to single out any, especially in an age that is fitter to furnish presidents for the future, than to borrow of the past times. But supposing the Parasite not actually guilty of this base revolt (which yet he seldom fails to be upon occasion) yet is he no less Trecherous even in the height of his Blandishments; and while he most courts a man, he do's the most ruinously undermine him. For first he abuses him in his understanding, precludes him from that which wise men have judged the most essential part of Learning, the knowledge of himself; from which 'tis the main business of the Flatterer to divert him. And to this abuse there is another inevitably consequent: for this ignorance of his faults or follies, necessarily condemns him to the continuing in them, it being im-

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possible for him to think of correcting either the one or the other, who is made believe he has neither. This is like the treachery of a bribed officer in a Garrison, who will not let the weak parts be fortified, and laies the man as open to assaults as that doth the Town. Yet this is not all, he do's not only provide for the continuance, but the improving of his crimes and errors, which alas are too prolific of themselves, but being cultivated and manured with perpetual soothing and encouragements, grow immesurably luxuriant. And accordingly we see, that men used only to applauses, are so swell'd with them, that their insolences are intolerable. And this they are sometimes taught to their cost, when they happen among free men, who will not submit to all they say, nor commend all they do. And finding these uneasy contradictions when they come abroad, they are willing to retire to their most complaisant company: and so this Sycophant Devil having once got them within his circle, may enchant them as he pleases, lead them from one wickedness to another. And as *Caligula* and other voluptuous Emperours, by being adored  
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as Gods; sunk in their sensuality below the Nature of man, so these celebrated Persons are by that false veneration animated to all those reprochful practices, which may expose them to a real contempt: their follies, as well as their vices still get head, till they answer the description the Wise man gives of the old Giants, *Who fell away in the strength of their foolishness.* Eccl. 16. 7.

6. AND sure he that betraies a man to all these mischiefs, may well be thought perfidious. But that wick infinitely amplifies and enhances the Trechery is, that all this is acted under the notion and disguise of a friend; a relation so venerable, that methinks 'tis the nearest secular transcript of the treason, which is storied of those who have administred Poison in the Eucharist. The name of a friend is such an endearment, as nothing human can equal. All other natural or civil ties take their greatest force from this. What signifies an unfriendly Parent, or Brother, or Wife? 'Tis friendship only that is the cement which really and effectively combines mankind: and therefore we may observe, that God reckoning up other relations, illustrates them  
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by several notes of endearment, but when he comes to that of friendship, 'tis *the friend who is as thine own soul*, Deut. 13. 6. nothing below the highest instance was thought expressive enough of that union. What a Legion of Fiends then possesseth men that can break these chains Mat. 5. 4. nay that can hammer and forge those very chains into Daggers and Stillettoes, and make their friendship an engine of ruine? This is certainly the blackest color wherein we can view a Parasite, his false light makes the shadow the more dismal. As the Ape has a peculiar deformity above other brutes by that aukward and ungraceful resemblance he has to a man, so sure a Flatterer is infinitely the more hateful for being the ugly counterfeit of a Friend. And as this Trechery lies at the bottom of the Panegyrics, so also do's it of all the caresses and exuberant kindness of a Flatterer, which if they aimed not at any particular end of circumvention, must yet in the general be trecherous by being false. A man looks on the love of his friend as one of the richest possessions (upon which account the Philosopher thought friends were to be Inventoried as well as goods.)

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What a defeat and discomfiture is it to a man when he comes to use this wealth, to find it all false metall, such as will not answer any of those purposes for which he depended on it. There cannot sure be a greater Trechery, then first to raise a confidence and then deceive it. But besides this fundamental falseness, there are also many incidental Trecheries, which fall in upon occasion of particular designs. A pretence of kindness is the universal stale to all base projects: by this men are rob'd of their fortunes, and women of their honor: in a word all the wolfish designs walk under this sheeps clothing; and as the world goes, men have more need to beware of those who call themselves friends, then those who own themselves enemies.

7. THESE are the lineaments of this vice of Flattery, which sure do together make up a face of most extreme deformity. I might upon a true account add another, and charge it with folly too. I am sure according to the Divine estimate it is alwaies so: and truly it do's not seldom prove so in the secular also. Men of this art do somtimes drop their wizzard before they have got the prize,  
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and then there is nothing in the world that appears so contemptible, so silly; a barefaced Flatterer being every bodies scorn. The short is, wherever this game is plaied there is alwaies a fool in the case: if the parasite be detected, it falls to his share: if he be not, to his whom he deludes. But at the best 'tis but subtilty and cunning he can boast of; and if he can in his own fancy raise that to the opinion of true Wisdom, 'tis a sign he is come round to practice his deceits upon himself, and is as much his own Flatterer as he has bin others.

8. AND now I know not whether it be more shame or wonder, to see that men can so put off ingenuity, and the native greatness of their kind, as to descend to so base, so ignoble a vice: yet alas we daily see it don, and that not only by the scum and refuse of the people, such as *Job* speaks of, *who are viler then the earth*, Cap. 30. 8. but by Persons of all conditions. Flattery like a spring forc'd upwards ascends, as cares are by the wise man said to descend, *Ecclus. 40. 4. from him that weareth a linen frock to him that weareth a crown*: all intermedial degrees are but like pipes, which as they

suck from below, so transmit it still upwards. There are few so low but find some body to cajole and flatter them. Some interest or other may sometimes be to be served even upon the meanest, and those that find themselves thus solicited for benefits, are easily taught by it how to address to their immediate superiors, from whom they expect greater: and as 'tis thus handed from one rank to another, the art still is more subtilized and refined ( God help poor Princes the while, who commonly meet with the Elixir, and quintessence of this venem: ) and thus it passes thro all states and conditions; as they are passive on the one side, and are flattered by some, so they are active on the other, and flatter others.

9. I say all conditions, I do not say all Persons in those conditions, for no truly generous soul can stoop so low: but 'tis too evident to what a low ebb Generosity as well as Christianity is grown, by the numbers of those who thus degrade themselves, every little petty interest being thought worth these base submissions. And truly it is hard to find, by what Topic of perswasion to assault such men. The meanness, or the sin will scarce be diffwa-  
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sives to those who have reconciled themselves to both: if any thing can be pertinently said to them, it must be upon the score of Interest, for that being their grand principle, they can with no pretence disclame the inferences drawn thence.

10. LET them therefore duly balance the advantages they project from this practice with the mischiefs and dangers of it. What they expect is commonly either Honor or wealth, these they hope may be acquired by their prostrations to those, who can dispense or procure them. 'Tis true, as Honor signifies Greatness and power, it is sometimes attain'd by it, but then as it signifies Reputation and esteem, 'tis as sure to be lost. He that thus ascends, may be lookt on with fear, but never with reverence. Now I think 'tis no good bargain to exchange this second notion of Honor for the first: for besides the difference in the intrinsic value, 'tis to be consider'd how tottering a Pinnacle unmerited Greatness is. He that rais'd him to satisfy his humor at one time, can (with more ease and equal justice) throw him down at another: and when such a mando's fall, he

he falls as without pity, so without remedy, has no foundation on which to rebuild his fortune. His Sycophanting arts being detected, that Game is not to be plaid the second time: whereas a man of a clear reputation, tho his barque be split, yet he saves his Cargo, has something left towards setting up again, and so is in capacity of receiving benefit not only from his own industry, but the friendship of others. A sound piece of Timber, if it be not thought fit for one use, yet will be laid by for another: and an honest man will probably at one time or other be thought good for something.

II. As for the other aim, that of Wealth, 'tis very possible that may sometimes be compassed; and well it may, the flatterer, having several Springs to feed it by. For he that has a great Patron, has the advantage of his countenance and Authority: he has that of his bounty and liberality, and he has another (sometimes greater than both) that of his negligence and deceivableness. But yet all these acquisitions are many times like Fairy money, what is brought one night is taken away the next. Men of this mold seldom

dom know how to bear prosperity temperately, and it is no new thing to see a Privado carry it so high, as to awaken the jealousy of his promoter, which being assisted by the busy industry of those who envy his fortune, 'twill be easy enough to find some flaw in his Gettings, by which to unravel the whole Web: an event that has bin oft experimented not only in the private managery of Families, but in the most public administrations. And these are such hazards, that laid all together would much recommend to any the Moral of *Horaces Fable*, and make one chuse the Country Mouses plain fare and safety, rather than the delicacies of the City with so much danger. This then is the state of the prosperous Parasite: but alas how many are there who never arrive to this, but are kickt down ere they have climb'd the two or three first rounds of the Ladder, whose designs are so humble, as not to aspire above a Major-Domo, or some such domestic preferment, (for in this trade there are adventurers of all frizes.) But upon all these considerations, methinks it appears no very inviting one to any. At the long  
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run an honest freedom of speech will more recommend a man, then all these sneaking flatteries: we have a very wise mans word for it: *he that rebuketh a man, afterwards shall find more favor, then he that flattereth with his lips.* Pro. 28. 23.

12. BUT after all that hath or can be said, the suppression of Flattery will most depend upon those Persons to whom it is address: if it be not repuls'd there, nothing else will discourage it; and if it be, 'tis crush'd in the egg, and can produce no viper. These Vulturs prey only on carcasses, on such stupid minds, as have not life and vigor enough to fray them away. Let but Persons of quality entertain such customers with a severe brow, with some smart expression of dislike, those Leeches will immediatly fall off. In *Sparta* when all laws against theft prov'd ineffectual, at last they fixt the penalty on them that were rob'd, and by that did the business: and in the present case, if 'twere made as infamous to be flatter'd as 'tis to flatter, I believe it might have the like effect. Indeed there is pretence enough to make it so: for first as to Wit, the advantage is clear on the Flatterers side

side: he must be allowed to have more of that (which in this age is more than a counterpoise to honesty; ) and as for vertue, the balance (as to the principal motive) seems to hang pretty even: 'tis the vice of Avarice that tempts the one to flatter, and the vice of Pride that makes it acceptable to the other. The truth is, there is the bottom of the matter; 'tis that secret confederate within, that exposes men to those assaults from without. We have generally such an appetite to praise, that we greedily suck it in without staying to examine whether it belong to us or no, or whether it be design'd as a kindness or an abuse. Other injuries rush upon us with violence, and give us notice of their approach: they may be said to come *like water into our bowels; but this like oil into our bones* Psa. 109, 18. penetrates easily, undiscernibly, by help of that native propension we have to receive it. 'Tis therefore the near concern of all, especially of those whose quality most exposes them, to keep a guard upon that trecherous inmate, not to let that step into the scale to make a base Sy-cophant out-weigh a true friend, and when ever they are attacked with ex-

travagant Encomiums, let them fortify themselves with this Dilemma, Either they have those excellences they are praised for, or they have not: if they have not, 'tis an apparent cheat and gull, and he is of a pittiful forlorn understanding that delights to be fool'd: but if they have, they are too good to be exposed to such worms who will instantly wither the fairest gourd, Jon. 4. 7.

For as it is said of the *Grand Signior*, that no grass growes where his horse once treads: so we may say of the Flatterer, no vertue ever prospers where he is admitted: if he find any he hugs it till he stifles it, if he find none, he so indisposes the soil, that no future seeds can ever take root. In fine, he is a mischief beyond the description of any Character. O let not men then act this Part to themselves by being their own parasites! and than 'twill be an easy thing to escape all others.

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SECT. IX.

*Of Boasting.*

1. **W**E have now seen some effects of an ungovern'd Tongue, as they relate to God and our Neighbor. There is yet a third sort which reflect upon a mans self. So unboundedly mischievous is that petulant member, that heaven and earth are not wide enough for its range, but it will find work at home too; and like the viper, that after it had devoured its companions, prei'd upon its self, so it corrodes inward, and becomes often as fatal to its owner, as to all the world besides.

2. OF this there are as many instances, as there are imprudent things said, for all such have the worst reflection upon the speaker: and therefore all that have given rules for civil life, have in order to it put very severe restraints upon the Tongue, that it run not before the judgment. 'Twas the advice of

*Zeno* to dip the Tongue in the mind before one should permit it to speak. *Theophrastus* used to say, *It was safer trusting to an unbridled horse, then to intemperate speech.* And daily experience confirms the Aphorism; for those that set no guard upon their Tongues, are hurried by them into a thousand indecences, and very often into reall considerable mischiefs. By this means men have proved their own delators, discovered their own most important secrets: and whereas their heart should have kept a lock upon their Tongue, they have given their Tongue the key of their heart, and the event has bin oft as unhappy as the proceeding was preposterous. There are indeed so many waies for men to lose themselves in their talk, that I should do the like if I should pretend to trace them. Besides my subject leads me not to discourse Ethically, but Christianly of the faults of the Tongue, and therefore I have all a long considered the one no farther then it happens to be twisted with the other.

3. IN the present case I shall insist only upon one fault of the Tongue, which partakes of both kinds, and it is at once



a vice and a folly, I mean that of Boasting and vaunting a mans self: a strain to which some mens tongues have a wonderful glibness. No discourse can be administred, but they will try to turn the Tide, and draw it all into their own Chanel, by entertaining you with long stories of themselves: or if there be no room for that, they will at least screw in here and there some intimations of what they did or said. Yea so stupid a vanity is this, that it works alike upon all materials: not only their greater and more illustrious acts or sentences, but even their most slight and trivial occurrences, by being theirs, they think acquire a considerableness, and are forcibly imposed upon the company; the very dreams of such people strait commence prophesy, and are as seriously related, as if they were undoubted revelations. And sure if we reflect upon our Saviors rule, that *Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*, we cannot but think these men are very full of themselves; and to be so, is but another phrase for being very Proud. So 'tis Pride in the heart, which is the spring that feeds this perpetual current at the mouth, and under that notion we are to consider it.

4. AND truly there is nothing can render it more infamous, Pride being a vice that of all others is the most branded in Scripture as most detestable to God, and is signalized by the punishment to be so. This turned *Lucifer* out of Heaven, *Nebuchadnezzar* out of his Throne, nay out of Human society. And indeed it seems still to have something of the same effect, nothing rendring a man so inconsiderable; for it sets him above the meaner sort of company, and makes him intolerable to the better, and to complete the parallel, he seldom comes to know himself till he be turn'd a grazing, be reduced to some extremities.

5. B u t this Boasting arrogant humor, tho alwaies bad, yet is more or less so according to the Subject on which it works. If it be only on Natural excellences, as Beauty, Wit; or accidental acquisitions, as Honor, Wealth, or the like, yet even there 'tis not only a Theft, but a Sacriledg; the glory of those being due only to the Donor, not to the receiver, there being not so much as any predisposition in the subject to determine Gods bounty. He could have made the most deformed Beggar as handsom  
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and as rich, as those who most pride themselves in their wealth and beauty. No man fancies himself to be his own Creator, and tho some have assumed to be the Architects of their own fortunes, yet the frequent defeats of mens industry and contrivance, do sufficiently confute that bold pretence, and evince, that there is something above them, which can either blast or prosper their attempts. What an invasion then is it of Gods right, to ingross the honor of those things being don, which were not at all in their power to do? And sure the folly is as great in respect of men, as the sin is towards God. This boasting like a heavy Nurse, overlaies the Child: the vanity of that quite drowns the notice of the things in which tis founded; and men are not so apt to say, Such a man is Handsom, Wise, or Great, as that He is proud upon the fancy of being so. In a word He that celebrates his own excellences; must be content with his own applauses, for he will get none of others, unless it be from those flawning Sycophants, whose praises are worse then bitterest Detraction.

Y<sup>t</sup> 6. AND yet so sottish a vice is Pride,  
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that it can make even those insidious Flatteries matter of boast, which is a much more irrational object of it then the former. How eagerly do some men propagate every little Encomium their Parasites make of them? With what gust and sensuality will they tell how such a Jest of theirs took, or such a Magnificence was admired? 'Tis pleasant to see what little Arts and dexterities they have to wind in such things into discourse; when alas it amounts to no more then this, that some have thought them fools enough to be flatter'd, and 'tis odds but the hearers will think them enough so to be laught at.

7. BUT there is yet another Subject of Boasting more foolish, and more criminal too then either of the former, and that is when men vaunt of their Piety, which if it were true, were yet less owing to themselves then any natural endowment. For tho we do not at all assist towards them, yet do we neither obstruct; but in the operations of Grace 'tis otherwise; we have there a principle of opposition, and God never makes us his own till he subdue that: and tho he do it not by an irresistible force, but by  
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such sweet and gentle insinuations, that we are sometimes captivated ere we are aware : yet that do's not impeach his right of conquest, but only shews him the more gracious conqueror. 'Tis true in respect of the event we have great cause of exultance and joy, Gods service being the most perfect freedom : yet in regard of the efficiency, we have as little matter of Boast, as the surprized City has in the triumphs of its victor.

8. B U T secondly either this vaunted Piety is not real, and then 'tis good for nothing, or else by being vaunted becomes so. If it be not real, 'tis then the superadding Hypocrisy to the former sacriledg, an attempt at once to rob God and cheat men, and in the event usually renders them hateful to both ; to God ( who cannot be mocked ) it do's so at the instant, and seldom misses to do so at last to men. An Hypocrite has a long part to act, and if his memory fail him but in any one scene, his play is spoiled : so that his hazards are so great, that 'tis as little prudent as 'tis honest to set up the trade, especially in an age when Piety it self is at so low a price, that its counterfeit cannot pass for much. But if the

Piety be indeed true, the Boasting it blasts it, makes it utterly insignificant. This we are told by *Christ* himself, who assures us, that even the most Christian actions of praier, almes, and fasting, must expect no other reward (when boasted) then the sought-for applause of men. Mat. 6. When a man shall make his own tongue the trumpet of his Alms, or the echo of his Praiers, he carves, or rather snatches his own reward, and must not look God should heap more upon him: the recompence of his pride he may indeed look for from him, but that of his vertue he has forestall'd. In short, piety is like those lamps of old, which maintain'd their light some Ages underground, but as soon as they took air expired. And surely there cannot be a more deplorable folly, then thus to lose a rich Jewel: only for the pitiful pleasure of shewing it: its the humor of Children and Idiots, who must be handling their birds till they fly away, and it ranks us with them in point of discretion, tho not of innocence.

9. FROM the view of these particulars we may in the gross conclude that this ostentation is a most foolish sin, such  
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as never brought in advantage to any man. There is no vice so undermines it self as this do's: 'tis glory it seeks, and instead of gaining that, it loses common ordinary estimation. Every body that sees a bladder puffed up, knows 'tis but wind that so swells it: and there is no surer argument of a light frothy brain then this bubbling at the mouth. Indeed there is nothing renders any man so contemptible, so utterly useless to the world: it excludes him almost from all commerce, makes him incapable of receiving or doing a benefit. No man will do him a good turn because he foresees he will arrogate it to himself, as the effect of his merit: and none (that are not in some great exigence) will receive one from him, as knowing it shall be not only proclaimed, but magnified much above the true worth. There seems to be but one purpose for which he serves, and that is to be sport for his company: and that he seldom fails to be, for in these gamesome daies men will not lose such an opportunity of divertisement, and therefore will purposely give him hints, which may put him upon his Rhodomontades. I do not speak this by way of encourage-

ment to them , but only to shew these vaporers , to what scorn they expose themselves , and what advantage they give to any that have a mind to abuse them : for they need not be at any pains for it , they do but swim with their stream ; an approving nod or smile serves to drive on the design , and make them display themselves more disadvantageously , more ridiculously , then the most Satyrical Character could possibly do.

10. B U T besides these sportive projects , such a man laies himself open to more dangerous circumventions. He that shews himself so enamour'd of praise , that ( *Narcissus* like ) dotes on his own reflections , is a fit prey for Flatterers , and such a Carcase will never want those Eagles : when his weak part is once discern'd ( as it must soon be when himself publishes it ) he shall quickly be surrounded with assailants. The last Section has shewed the misery of a man so besieged , therefore I shall not enlarge on it here ; this mention being only intended to evince how apt this vain glorious humor is to betray men to it.

11. T H E S E are competent Specimens of the folly of this vice ; but it has yet a far-



a farther aggravation, that it precludes all means of growing wiser : 'tis *Salomons* assertion, *Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a Fool then of him*, Pro. 26. 12. And the reason is evident, for he discards the two grand instruments of instruction, Admonition and Observation. The former he thinks superseded by his own Perfections, and therefore when any such friendly office is attempted towards him, he imputes it either to Envy, and a desire to eclipse his lustre by finding some spot, or else to Ignorance and incapacity of estimating his worth : the one he entertains with Indignation, the other with disdainful Pity. As for Observation, he so circumscribes it within himself, that it can never fetch in any thing from without. Reading of men has bin by some thought the most facile and expedite Method for acquiring Knowledg ; and sure for some kinds of Knowledg it is : but then a man must not only read one Author, much less the one worst he can pick out for himself. 'Tis an old true saying, He that is his own Pupil shall have a Fool for his Tutor : and truly he that studies only himself, will be like to make  
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but a sorry Progress. Yet this is the case of arrogant men, they lose all the benefit of Conversation, and when they should be enriching their Minds with foreign treasure, they are only counting over their own store. Instead of advertising to those sober discourses which they hear from others, they are perhaps watching to interrupt them by some pompous Story of themselves, or at least in the abundance of their self-sufficiency, think they can say much better things, Magisterially obtrude their own notions, and fall a teaching when 'tis fitter they should learn: and sure to be thus forward to lay out, and take no care to bring in, must needs end in a Bankrupt state. 'Tis true I confess the study of a mans-self is (rightly taken) the most useful part of Learning, but then it must be such a Study as brings him to know himself, which none do so little as these men, who in this are like those silly women the Apostle describes, 2. Tim. 3. 7. *Who are ever learning yet never attain.* And 'tis no wonder, for they begin at the wrong end, make no inquiry into their faults or defects, but fix their Contemplation only on their  
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more splendid qualities, with which they are so dazled; that when you bring them to the darker parts of themselves, it fares with them as with those that come newly from gazing on the Sun, they can see nothing.

12. AND now having dissected this swelling vice, and seen what it is that feeds the tumor, the cure suggests it self. If the disease be founded in Pride, the abating that is the most natural and proper remedy: and truly one would think that mere weighing of the foregoing considerations, might prove sufficient allaiies to it. Yet because where humors are turgent, 'tis necessary not only to purge them, but also to strengthen the infested parts, I shall adventure to give some few advices by way of Fortification and Antidote.

13. IN the first place, that of the Apostle offers it self to my hand, *Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others,* Phil.

2. 4. A counsil which in a distorted sense seems to be too much practiced. We are apt to apply it to worldly advantages, and in that notion not to look on our own things with thankfulness, but on o-  
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ther mens with envy. We'apply it also to errors and sins , and look not on our own to correct and reform , but on others to despise and censure. Let us at last take it in the genuine sense , and not look on our own excellencies , but those of others. We see in all things how desuetude do's contract and narrow our faculties , so that we can apprehend only those things wherein we are conversant. The droiling Pefant scarce thinks there is any world beyond his own Village , or the neighboring Markets , nor any gaity beyond that of a Wake or Morrice ; and men who are accustom'd only to the admiration of themselves , think there is nothing beside them worthy of regard. These unbred minds must be a little sent abroad , made acquainted with those excellencies which God has bestowed on other men , and then they will not think themselves like *Gideons* fleece to have suckt up all the dew of heaven : nay perhaps , they may find they rather answer the other part of the miracle ; and are drier then their neighbors. Let them therefore put themselves in this course , observe diligently all the good that is visible in other men :  
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and when they find themselves mounting into their altitudes, let them clog their wings with the remembrance of those who have out-soar'd them, not in vain opinion, but in true worth. 'Tis nothing but the fancy of singularity that puffs us up. To breath, to walk, to hear, to see, are excellent powers, yet no body is proud of them, because they are common to the whole kind; and therefore if we would observe the great number of those that equal, or exceed us, even in the more appropriate endowments, we should not put so excessive a price upon our selves.

14. SECONDLY if we will needs be reflecting upon our selves, let us do it more ingeniously, more equally, let us take a true survey, and observe as well the barren as the fertil part of the soil: and if this were don, many mens value would be much short of what they are willing to suppose it. Did we but compare our crop of Weeds and Nettles, with that of our Corn, we must either think our ground is poor, or our selves every ill husbands. When therefore the recollection of either real or fancied worth begins to make us aëry, let us condense again  
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by the remembrance of our sins and folly : 'tis the only possible service they can do us , and considering how dear they are to cost us , we had not need lose this one accidental advantage. In this sense *Satan may cast out Satan* , our vilest guilts help to eject our pride ; and did we well manage this one stratagem against him , 'twould give us more cause of triumph , then most of those things for which we so spread our plumes : I do not say we should contract new guilts to make us humble , God knows we need not , we have all of us enough of the old stock if we would but thus employ them.

15. IN the last place I should advise those who are apt to talk big things of themselves , to turn into some other road of discourse : for if they are their own Theme , their tongues will as naturally turn into Eulogies , as a horse do's into that Inn to which he is customed. All habits do require some little excess of the contrary to their cure : for we have not so just a scantling of our selves , as to know to a grain what will level the scales , and place us in the right Mediocrity. Let men therefore that have this infirmity

infirmity, shun (as far as prudence and interest permits) all discourse of themselves, till they can sever it from that unhappy appendage. They will not be at all the less acceptable company, it being generally thought none of the best parts of breeding, to talk much of ones self: for tho it be don so as not to argue pride yet it do's ignorance of more worthy subjects.

16. I should here conclude this Section, but that there is another sort of vaunting Talk, which was not well reducible to any of the former Heads, the Subject matter being vastly distant: for in those the Boasting was founded in some either real or supposed worth, but in this in Baseness and villany. There are a Generation of men, who have removed all the Land-marks which their Fathers (nay even the Father of Spirits) have set, revert the common notions of Humanity, and call evil good, and good evil, and those things which a moderate impudence would blush to be surpris'd in, they not only proclaim but boast off, blow the Trumpet as much before their crimes, as others before their good deeds. Nay so much do they affect this

inverted sort of Hypocrisy, that they own more wickedness than they act, assume to have made Practical the highest Speculations of villany, and like the Devils Knights errant, pretend to those Romantic achievements, which the veriest Fiend incarnate could never compass. These are such Prodigies, such Monsters of villany, that tho they are the objects of Grief and Wonder, they are not of Counsil. Men who thus rave, we may conclude their brains are turned, and one may as well read Lectures at Bedlam as treat with such. Yet we know that there sharp corrections recover crazed men to Sobriety; and then their Cure lies only in the hand of Civil Justice: if that would take them at their words, receive their brags as Confessions, and punish them accordingly, it may be a little real smart would correct this mad Itch, and teach them not *to glory in their shame*. Phil. 3: 19.

IN the mean time let others who are not yet arrived to this height, consider betimes; that all indulgent practice of sin is the direct Road to it, and according to the degrees of that indulgence, they make more or less hast. He  
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that constantly and habitually indulges, rides upon the Spur, and will quickly overtake his Leaders. Nay if it be but this one vice of vanity, it may finally bring him to their states. He that loves to brag, will scarce find exercise enough for that faculty in his virtues, and therefore may at last be tempted to take in his vices also. But that which is more seriously considerable is, that Pride is so provoking to Almighty God, that it often causes him to withdraw his *Grace*, which is a Donative he has promised only *to the humble*. Jam. 4. 6. And indeed when we turn that Grace into wantonness, as the Proud man do's who is pamper'd by it into high conceits of himself, 'tis not probable God will any longer prostitute his favors to such abuse. The Apostle observes it of the Gentiles, who had in contradiction of their natural light abandon'd themselves to vile Idolatries, that God *after gave them up to a reprobate mind and vile affections*. Rom. 1. 25. 26. But the Proud now stifle a much clearer light, and give up themselves to as base an Idolatry, the adoration of themselves. And therefore 'tis but equal to expect God should desert them, and (as some Nations  
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ons have Deified their diseases ) permit them to celebrate even their fowlest enormities. The application of all I shall sum up in the words of the Apostle. Rom. II. 21. *Take heed also that he spare not thee.*

## S E C T. X.

## Of Querulousness.

1. **T**O this of Boasting may not unfitly be subjoin'd another inordinancy of the Tongue, viz. murmuring and complaining. For tho these faults seem to differ as much in their complexions, as Sanguine do's from Melancholy, yet there is nothing more frequent then to see them united in the same Person. Nor is this a conjunction of a later date, but is as old as St. *Jude's* daies, who observes that the *murmurers* and *complainers* are the very same with those who speak *great swelling words*, Jude 16.

2. **N**OR are we to wonder to find them thus conjoined, if we consider what an original cognation and kindred they have

have, they being (however they seem devided) streams issuing from the same fountain. For the very same Pride which prompts a man to vaunt and overvalue what he is, do's as forcibly incline him to contemn and disvalue what he has; whilst mesuring his enjoiments by that vast Idea he has form'd of himself, 'tis impossible but he must think them below him.

3. THIS indeed is the true original of those perpetual complainings we hear from all sorts and conditions of men. For let us pass thro all Degrees, all Ages, we shall rarely find a single Person, much less any member of men, exempt from this Querulous, this sullen humor: as if that breath of life wherewith God originally inspired us, had bin given us not to magnify his Bounty, but to accuse his illiberality, and like the dismaller sort of instruments, could be tuned to no other Streins but those of Mourning and Lamentation. Every man contributes his note to this doleful Harmony, and after all that God has don to oblige and delight mankind, scarce any man is satisfied enough, I will not say to be thankfull, but to be patient. For alas  
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what Tragical complaints do men make of their infelicity, when perhaps their prosperity is as much the envious outcry of others? Every little defeat of a design, of an appetite, every little disregard from those above them, or less solemn observance from those below them, makes their *Heart hot within them*, Psal. 39. 3. and the tongue (that combustible part) quickly takes fire and *breaks out* into extravagant exclamations. It is indeed strange to see how weighty every the triviallest thing is when a passion is cast into the scale with it, how every the slightest inconvenience or petty want preponderates hundreds of great substantial blessings: when indeed were it in an instance never so considerable, it could be no just Counterpoise. Yet so closely is this corruption interwoven with our constitution, that it has sometimes prevail'd even upon good men. *Jacob* tho he had twelve sons, yet upon the supposed death of one despis'd the comforts of all the rest, and with an obstinate sorrow resolves to go *mourning to his Grave*. Gen. 35. 37. David after that signal victory which had preserv'd his life, reinstated him in his Throne, and  
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restor'd him to the Ark and Sanctuary, yet suffer'd the loss of his rebellious son, who was the Author of his danger, to overwhelm the sense of his deliverance, and instead of Hymns and praises, breaks out into ejulations and effeminate wailings, 2 Sam. 18. 33.

4. BUT God knows the most of our complaints cannot pretend to such considerable motives: they are not the bowels of a Father, the impresses of Nature that excite our repinings, but the impulses of our lusts and inordinate appetites. Our discontents are usually such as *Ahab's* for his neighbors vineyard, *Haman's* for *Mardcai's* obeisance, *Achitophel's* for having his counsil rejected. Every disappointment of our avarice, ambition, and pride, fill's our hearts with bitterness and our mouths with clamors. For if we should examine the numerous complaints which sound in every corner, it would doubtless be found that the greatest part of them have some such original: and that, whether the pretended grievances be public or private. For the first: many a man is a state male-content; merely because he sees another advanced to that honor or wealth which

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he thinks he has better deserv'd. He is alwaies inveighing against such unequal distributions, where the best services (such you may be sure his own are) are the worst rewarded: nor do's he ever cease to predict public ruines, till his private are repaired. But as soon as that is don, his Augury grows more mild: and as if the estate and he were like *Hippocrates's* twins, his recruites give new vigor to that, and till his next suit is denied, every thing is well administred. So full alas men are of themselves, that 'tis hard to find any the most splendid pretences which have not something of that at the bottom: and would every man ransack his own heart, and resolve not to cast a stone till he had first cleer'd it of all sinister respects, perhaps the number of our complainers would be much abated.

5. N O R is it otherwise in private discontents. Men are apt to think themselves ill used by any man who will not serve their interest or their humor, nay sometimes their vices; and are prone in all companies to arraign such an unpliant Person, as if he were an enemy to mankind, because he is not a slave to their will. How many have quarrel'd e-  
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ven with their dearest friends, because they would not assist them to their own ruine, or have striven to divert them from it: so forcible are our propensions to mutiny, that we equally take occasions from benefits or injuries.

6. BUT the highest and most unhappy instance of all is in our behavior towards God, whose allotments we dispute with the same or rather greater boldness than we do those of men. What else mean those impatient murmurs at those things which are the immediate issues of his Providence? Such are our native blemishes, diseases, death of friends, and the like. Nay what indeed are our displeasures even at those things which we pretend to fasten upon Second Causes? For those being all under the subordination of the first, cannot move but by its permission. This holy *Job* well discern'd and therefore do's not indite the *Chaldeans* or *Sabeans* for his plunder, but knowing they were but instruments, he submissly acknowledges, that there was a higher agent in his loss, *The Lord hath taken away*, *Job. i. 21*. When therefore we ravingly execrate the rapine of one man, the deceit of another for our impoverish-

ment, when we angrily charge our defamation on the malice of our maligners, our disappointments on the treachery or negligence of our friends, we do interpretatively conclude either that there is no over-ruling providence which could have restrained those events, or else (which is equally horrid) we accuse it as not having don well in permitting them. So that against whomsoever we direct our clamors, their last rebound is against Heaven; this Querulous humor carrying alwaies an implicate repugnance to Gods disposals: but where it is indulged to, it usually is its own expositor, and explicite avows it, charges God foolishly, and by impious murmurs blasphemes that power which it cannot resist. Indeed the progress is very natural for our impatiences at men to swell into mutinies against God: for when the mind is once imbitter'd, it distinguishes not of objects, but indifferently lets fly its venem. *He that frets himself*, the Prophet tells us, *will curse his King, nay his God*, Isa. 8. 21. and he that quarrels at Gods distributions, is in the direct road to defie his Being.

7. <sup>B</sup>y this we may estimate the danger



ger of our discontents , which tho at first they are introduced by the inordinate love of our selves , yet are very apt to terminate in hatred and Blasphemies against God. He therefore that would secure himself from the highest degree , must watch against the lowest ; as he that would prevent a total Inundation , must avert the smallest breach in his Banks. Not but that even the first beginnings are in themselves well worth our guarding : for abstracting from all the danger of this enormous increase , these murmurings ( like a mortiferous Herb ) are poisonous even in their first Spring , before they arrive to their full maturity. To be alwaies moralizing the Fable of *Prometheus* upon one's self , playing the Vultur upon one's own entrails , is no desirable thing , tho we were accountable to none but our selves for it : to dip our tongues in gall , to have nothing in our mouth but the extract , and exhalation of our inward bitterness , is sure no great Sensuality. So that did we consult only our own ease , we might from that single Topic draw arguments enough against our mutinies.

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8. B U T besides our duty and ease, our credit and reputation make their plea also. Fortitude is one of the noblest of moral virtues, and has the luck to appear considerable even to those who despise all the rest. Now one of the most proper and eminent acts of that is, the bearing adverse events with an evenness of temper. This passive valour is as much the mark of a great mind as the active, nay perhaps more, the later being often owing to the Animal, this to the Rational part of man. And sure we must strangely have corrupted the principles of *Morality* as well as *Religion*, if every turbulent unruly Spirit, that fills the world with blood and rapine, shall have his ferity called gallantry; yet that sober courage, that maintains it self against all the shocks of Fortune, that keeps its Post in spite of the rudest encounters, shall not be allowed at least as good a name. And then on the contrary we may conclude, that to sink under every cross accident, to be still whining and complaining, crying out upon every touch, is a note of a mean degenerate soul, below the dignity of our reasonable nature. For certainly God never gave  
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us reason for so unkind a purpose, as only to quicken and inhance the resentment of our sufferings, but rather to controule those disorders, which the more tumultuous part of us, our senses, are apt to raise in us: and we are so far men and no farther, as we use it to that end. Therefore if the dictates of religion cannot restrain our murmurs, if we are not Christians enough to submit to the divine precepts of meekness and acquiescence: yet let us at least keep within those bounds which ingenious nature has set us, and not by our unmanly impatiencies enter common with Brutes and Animals.

9. NAY I may farther add, if neither for Gods nor our own sakes, yet for others, for humane societies sake, this querulous inclination should be suppress'd; there being nothing that renders a man more unpleasant, more uneasy company. For (besides that 'tis very apt to vent it self upon those with whom he converses, rendring him capricious and exceptionous; and 'tis a harsh, a grating sound to hear a man alwaies in the complaining Key) no man would willingly dwell within the noise of shrieks  
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and groans; and the exclamations of the discontented differ from those only by being more articulate. It is a very unwelcome importunity, to entertain a mans company with remonstrances of his own infelicities and misadventures, and he that will relate all his grievances to others, will quickly make himself one to them. For tho he that is full of the inward sense of them, thinks it rather an ease then oppression to speak them out, yet the case is far otherwise with his Auditors: they are perhaps as much taken up with themselves; as he is, and is little at leisure to consider his concerns, as he theirs. Alas we are not now in those primitive daies, when there was as it were one common sense among Christians, when *if one member suffer'd, all the members suffer'd with it.* 1 Cor. 12. 26. That Charity which gave that sympathetic motion to the whole, is now it self benum'd, flows rarely beyond the narrow compass of our personal interest; and therefore we cannot expect that men should be very patient of our complaints who are not concern'd in the causes of them. The Priests answer to *Judas* do's speak the sense of most men  
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in the case *What is that to us? See thou to that.* Mat. 27. 4. I do not deny but that the discharging ones griefs into the bosome of a true friend, is both innocent and prudent: nay indeed he that has such a treasure, is unkind to himself if he use it not. But that which I would dissuade, is the promiscuous use of this liberty in common Conversation, the satisfying our Spleen, when we cannot ease our hearts by it, the loud declamings at our misery, which is seldom sever'd from as severe reflections on those whom we suppose the causes of it; by which nothing can be acquired but the opinion of our Impatience, or perhaps some new grievance from some, who think themselves concern'd to vindicate those whom we asperse. In a word 'tis as indecent as it is unacceptable, and we may observe all men are willing to sink out of such company, the Sober for the hazards, and Jovial for the unpleasantness. So that the murmurer seems to be turn'd off to the company of those doleful Creatures which the Prophet mentions, which were *to inhabite the ruines of Babylon*, 13. 21. For he is ill Conversation to all men, tho the worst of all to himself.

10. AND now upon the force of all these considerations, I may reasonably impress the Wise mans Counsil, *Therefore beware of murmuring*, Wisd. 1. 11. And indeed it is not the precept of the Wiseman alone, but of all who have made any just pretence to that title. For when we consider those excellent lectures of contentation and acquiescence, where-with the writings of Philosophers abound, 'tis hard to say whether they speak more of instruction or reproch to us. When their confused notions of a Deity had given them such impressions of his Wisdom and goodness, that they would not pretend to make any elections for themselves: how do's it shame our more explicite knowledg, who dare not depend on him in the smallest instance? who will not take his disposalls for good, unless our senses become his sureties? which amounts but to that degree of credit, which the most faithless man may expect from us, the trusting him as far as we see him. This is such a contumely to him, as the Ethnic world durst not offer him, and is the peculiar insolence of us degenerated Christians, who sure cannot be thought in earnest when

when we talk of singing *Hallelujahs* in the next world to him, whilst we entertain him here only with the sullen noise of murmurs and repinings. For we are not to think that Heaven will Metamorphose us on a sudden, and turn our exclamations and wild clamors into Lauds and Magnificats. It do's indeed perfect and crown those graces which were here inchoate and begun, but no mans conversion ever succeeded his being there: for Christ has expressly told us, *That except we be converted, we shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven*: if we go hence in our froward discontents, they will associate us with those, with whom is *Weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth.*

## S E C T. XI.

*Of Positiveness.*

I. **A**NOTHER very unhandfom circumstance in discourse is the Being over confident and peremtory, a thing which do's very much unfit men for conversation, it being lookt on as the common birth-right of mankind, that every man is to opine according to the dictates of his own understanding, not anothers. Now this Peremtoriness is of two sorts, the one a Magisterialness in matters of opinion and speculation, the other a Positiveness in relating matters of fact; in the one we impose upon mens understandings, in the other on their faith.

2. **F**OR the first, he must be much a stranger in the world who has not met with it: there being a generation of men, who as the Prophet speaks, *Are wise in their own eies, and prudent in their own sight*: Isa. 5. 21. Nay not only so, but who  
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make themselves the standards of wisdom, to which all are bound to conform, and whoever weighs not in their balance, be his reasons never so weighty, they write *Tekel* upon them. This is one of the most oppressive Monopolies imaginable: all others can concern only something without us, but this fastens upon our nature, yea and the better part of it too, our reason; and if it meet with those who have any considerable share of that within them, they will often be tempted to rally it, and not too tamely resign this native liberty. Reason submits only to Reason, and he that assaults it with bare Authority (that which is Divine alwaies excepted) may as well cut flame with his sword, or harden wax in the sun.

3. 'T IS true indeed these great Dictators do sometimes run down the company, and carry their Hypothesis without contest: but of this there may be divers reasons besides the weight of their arguments. Some unspeculative men may not have the skill to examine their assertions, and therefore an assent is their safest course; others may be lazy and not think it worth their pains; a third sort may be modest and awed by a severe brow

brow and an imperious nod : and perhaps the wiser may providently foresee the impossibility of convincing one who thinks himself not subject to error. Upon these or other like grounds 'tis very possible all may be silenced when never a one is convinced : so that these great Masters may often make very false estimates of their conquests , and *sacrifice to their own nets* , Heb. i. 16. when they have taken nothing.

4. NAY indeed this insolent way of proposing is so far from propagating their notions , that it gives prejudice against them. They are the gentle insinuations which pierce , ( as oil is the most penetrating of all liquors ; ) but in these Magisterial documents men think themselves attackt , and stand upon their guard , and reckon they must part with Honor together with their Opinion , if they suffer themselves to be Hector'd out of it. Besides , this imposing humor is so unamiable , that it gives an aversion to the Person ; and we know how forcible personal prejudices are ( tho 'tis true they should not be ) towards the biasing of Opinions. Nay indeed men of this temper do cut themselves off

off from the opportunities of Profelyting others, by averting them from their company. Freedom is the endearing thing in Society, and where that is controld, men are not very fond of associating themselves. 'Tis natural to us to be uneasy in the presence of those who assume an Authority over us. Children care not for the company of their Parents or Tutors, and men will care less for theirs, who would make them Children by usurping a Tutorage.

5. ALL these inconveniences are evidently consequent to this Dogmatizing, supposing men be never so much in the right: but if they happen to be in the wrong, what a ridiculous pageantry is it, to see such a Philosophical gravity fet to man out a Solecism? A concluding Face put upon no concluding Argument, is the most contemptible sort of folly in the world. They do by this sound a trumpet to their own defeat: and whereas a modest mistake might slip by undiscern'd, these Rodomontade errors force themselves upon mens observation, and make it as impossible for men not to see, as it is not to despise them when they do. For indeed Pride is as  
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ill linkt with Error, as we usually say it is with Beggery, and in this as well as that, converts pity into contemt.

6. AND then it would be considered, what security any man that will be imposing has, that this will not be his case. Human nature is very fallible, and as it is possible a man may err in a great many things, so 'tis certain every man do's in something or other. Now who knows at the instant he is so positive, but this may be his erring turn? Alas how frequently are we mistaken even in common ordinary things! for as the Wiseman speakes, *hardly do we judg a-right even in things that are before us*, Wisd. 9. 16. our very senses do sometimes delude us. How then may we wander in things of abstruse speculation? The consideration of this hath with some so prevail'd, that it has produc'd a Sect of Scepticism: and tho I press it not for that purpose, yet sure it may reasonably be urg'd to introduce some modesty and calmness in our assertions. For when we have no other certainty of our being in the right, but our own persuasions that we are so: this may often be but making one error the gage for an  
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another. For God knows confidence is so far from a certain mark of truth, that 'tis often the seducer into falshood, none being so apt to lose their way as those who out of an ungrounded presumption of knowing it, despise all direction from others.

7. LET all this be weighed, and the result will be, that this peremptoriness is a thing that can besit no form of understanding. It renders Wise men disobliging and troublesom, and fools ridiculous and contemptible. It casts a prejudice upon the most solid reasoning, and it renders the lighter more notoriously despicable. 'Tis pity good parts should be leven'd by it, made a snare to the owners, and useless to others. And 'tis pity too that weak parts should by it be condemn'd to be alwaies so, by despising those Aids which should improve them. Since therefore 'tis so ill calculated for every Meridian, would God all Climes might be purged from it.

8. AND as there are weighty objections against it in respect of its effects, so there are no inconsiderable prejudice in relation to its causes, of which we may reckon Pride to be the most certain

and universal ; for what ever else casually occurs to it , this is the fundamental constitutive principle ; nothing but a great overweening of a mans own understanding being able to inflate him in that imaginary empire over other mens. For here fore we may ask the Apostles question , *Who made thee to differ from another ?* When God has made Rationality the common portion of mankind , how came it to be thy inclosure ? or what Signature has he set upon thine , what mark of excellence , that thine should be paramount ? Doubtless if thou fanciest thou hast that part of *Jacobs* blessing , *To be Lord of thy brethren , and that all thy mothers sons should bow down to thee ,* Gen. 27. 29. thou hast got it more surreptitiously than he did , and with less effect : for tho *Isaac* could not retract his mistaken benediction , God will never ratify that fantastic , thou hast pronounced to thy self , with his real effective one.

9. B U T there happens many times to be another ingredient besides Pride , and that is Ignorance : for those qualities however they may seem at war , do often very closely combine. He who has narrow

row notions, that knows but a few things, and has no glimpse of any beyond him, thinks there are no such: and therefore as if he had (like *Alexander*) no want but that of worlds to conquer, he thinks himself the absolute Monarch of all knowledg. And this is of all others the most unhappy composition: for ignorance being of its self like stiff clay, an infertile soile, when Pride comes to scorch and harden it, it grows perfectly impenetrable: and accordingly we see none are so inconvincible as your half-witted people; who know just enough to excite their pride, but not so much as to cure their ignorance.

10. THERE remains yet a 2<sup>d</sup> kind of *Péremptoriness* which I am to speak to, and that is of those who can make no relation without an attestation of its certainty: a sort of hospitable people, who entertain all the idle vagrant reports, and send them out with passports and testimonials, who when they have once adopted a story, will have it pass for legitimate how spurious soever it originally was. These somewhat resemble those Hospitals in *Italy*, where all bastards are sure of reception, and such a provision

as may enable them to subsist in the world: and were it not for such men, many a Fatherless lie would be stifled in its birth. It is indeed strange to see, how suddenly loose rumors knit into formal stories, and from thence grow to certainties; but 'tis stranger to see that men can be of such profligated impudence, as knowingly to give them that advance. And yet 'tis no rarity to meet with such men who will pawn their honor, their souls, for that unworthy purpose: nay and that too with as much impertinence as baseness, when no interest of their own, or perhaps any mans else is to be served by it.

10. THIS is so prodigious a thing, as seems to excite ones Curiosity to inquire the cause of so wonderful an effect. And here, as in other unnatural productions, there are several concurrents. If we trace it from its original, its first Element seems to be Idleness: this diverting a man from serious useful entertainments, forces him upon (the usual refuge of vacant Persons (the inquiring after News; which when he has got, the venting of it is his next business. If he be of a credulous Nature, and believe it



it himself, he do's the more innocently impose it on others: yet then to secure himself from the imputation of Levity and too easy Faith, he is often tempted to lend some probable circumstance. Nay if he be of a proud humor, and have that miserable vanity of loving to speak big, and to be thought a man of greater correspondence and intelligence than his Neighbors, he will not bate an Ace of absolute certainty; but however doubtful or improbable the thing is, coming from him it must go for an indisputable truth. This seems to be the descent of this unhappy folly, which yet is often nurs'd up by a mean or imprudent Education. A man that hath convers'd only with that lower sort of company, who durst not dispute his veracity, thinks the same false Coin will pass over the world, which went currant among his Fathers Servants or Tenants: and therefore we may observe that this is most usuall in young men, who have come raw into company with good fortunes and ill breeding. But it is too true also that too many never lose that habit, but are as morosely positive in their Age, as they were childishly so in their Youth. Indeed

deed 'tis impossible they should be otherwise, unless they have the wit to disentangle themselves first from the love of Flattery, and after from the company of Flatterers: for (as I have before observ'd) no vice will ever wither under their shade. I think I shall do the Reader no ill office to let in a little light upon them, and shew him some of those many mischiefs that attend this unworthy practice.

12. FIRST, it engages a man to Oaths, and for ought he knows to Perjuries. When he has launcht out boldly into an incredible relation, he thinks he has put his Credit upon the forlorn hope, and must take care to relieve it: and there is no succor so constantly ready at hand as that of Oaths and imprecations, and therefore whole vollies of them are discharged upon the doubtful. Thus do we make God a witness, and our Souls parties in the cause of every trifling rumor, as if we had model'd our Divinity by the Scheme of that Jesuitical Casuist, who legitimates the Killing of a man for an Apple.

13. A second mischief is, that it betraies man to quarrels. He that is perem-

peremptory in his own Story, may meet with another that is as peremptory in the contradiction of it, and then the two *Sr. Positives* must have a skirmish indeed. He that has attested the truth of a false, or the certainty of a doubtful thing, has brought himself into the same strait with *Baalams Ass*, he must either fall down flat, or run upon a sword, Num. 22. 27. For if his Hearers do but express a diffidence, either he must sink to a down-right Confession that he was a Liar: or else he must huff and bluster till perhaps he raise a counter-storm, and as he fool'd himself out of his truth, so be beaten out of his pretence to it. Indeed there is scarce any quality that do's so tempt and invite affronts as this do's; for he that can descend to such a meanness, may reasonably enough be presumed to have little (as of true worth, so) even of that which the world calls Gallantry, and so every puny sword-man will think him a good tame Quarry to enter and flesh himself upon.

14. IN the third place it exposes him to all the contempt and scorn which either good or ill men can sling upon him: the good abominate the sin, the ill triumph

umph over the folly of it. The truth is there can be nothing more wretchedly mean. To be Knight of the Post to every fabulous relation, is such a fordid thing, that there can scarce be any name of reproch too vile for it. And certainly he that can pawn his faith upon such miserable terms, will by those frequent mortgages quickly be snapt upon a forfeiture; or however will have his credit so impar'd by it, that no man will think his word a competent gage for the slightest concern.

15. AND this may pass for a fourth consideration, That this Positiveness is so far from gaining credit to his present affirmation, that it destroys it for the future: for he that sees a man make no difference in the confidence of his asserting realities and fictions, can never take his measures by any thing he avers, but according to the common Proverb, will be in danger of disbelieving him even when he speaks truth. And of this no man can want conviction, who will but consult his own observation. For what an allay do we find it to the credit of the most probable event, that it is reported by one who uses to stretch? Thus  
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unhappily do such men defeat their own designs: for while they aver stoutly, that they may be believed, that very thing makes them doubted, the world being not now to learn how frequently Confidence is made a supplement for Truth. Nor let any man who uses this flatter himself that he alone do's (like *Jobs* messenger) escape the common fate; for tho perhaps he meet with some who in civility or pity will not dispute the probability of his narrations, or with others who for raillery will not discourage the humor with; which they mean (in his absence) to divert themselves; yet he may rest assur'd he is discern'd by all, and derided for it.

16. IT therefore concerns men who either regard their truth, or their reputation, nor to indulge to this humor, which is the most silly way of shipwrecking both. For he that will lay those to stake upon every flying story, may as well wager his estate which way the wind will sit next morning, there being nothing less to be confided in, than the breath of fame, or the whispers of private tale-bearers. Wise men are afraid to report improbable truths: what a fool-hardiness is it

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then to attest improbable falsities, as it often is the luck of these Positive men to do?

17. CERTAINLY there is nothing which they design by this, which may not be obtain'd more effectually by a modest and unconcern'd relation. He that barely relates what he has heard, and leaves the hearer to judg of the probability, do's as much (I am sure more civilly) entertain the company, as he that throws down his gauntlet in attestation. He as much satisfies the itch of telling news; he as much perswades his hearers: nay very much more ( for these over earnest asseverations serve but to give men suspicion that the Speaker is conscious of his own falseness: ) and all this while he has his retreat secure, and stands not responsible for the truths of his relation. Nay indeed tho men speak never so known and certain truths, 'tis most advisablen ot to press them too importunately. For boldness, like the Bravoes and Banditti, is seldom employed but upon desperate services, and is so known a Pander for lying, that truth is but defam'd by its attendance.

18. To conclude, modesty is so amiable

ble, so insinuating a thing, that all the rules of Oratory cannot help men to a more agreeable ornament of discourse. And if they will try it in both the foregoing instances, they will undoubtedly find the effects of it: a modest proposal will soonest captivate mens reasons, and a modest relation their belief.

## S E C T. XII.

*Of Obscene Talk.*

I. **T**HERE is another vice of the Tongue which I cannot but mention, tho I knew not in which of the former Classes to place it: not that it comes under none, but that 'tis so common to all, that 'tis not easy to resolve to which peculiarly to assign it, I mean obscene and immodest talk, which is offensive to the purity of God, dammageable and infectious to the innocence of our Neighbors, and most pernicious to ourselves: and yet is now grown a thing so common, that one would think we were fallen into an Age of Metamorphosis, and that the Brutes did, not only Poetically and in fiction, but really speak. For the talk of many is so bestial, that it seems to be but the conceptions of the more libidinous Animals clothed in human Language.

2. **A**ND yet even this must pass for Ingenuity, and this vile descent below  
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Humanity, must be counted among the highest streins of Wit. A wretched debasement of that sprightful Faculty; thus to be made the interpreter to a Goat or Boar: for doubtless had those Creatures but the organs of Speech, their Fancies lie enough that way to make them as good company, as those who more studiously apply themselves to this sort of entertainment.

3. THE crime is comprehensive enough to afford abundance of matter for the most Satyrical zeal: but I consider the dissecting of putrid Bodies may cast such pestilential fumes, as all the benefits of the scrutiny will not recompence. I shall therefore in respect to the Reader dismiss this noisome Subject, and thereby give an example with what abhorrence he should alwaies reject such kind of discourse, remembring the advice of St. Paul, *That all uncleanness should not be once named among those who would walk as becometh Saints*, Eph. 5. 3.

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*The Close.*

1. **I** Have now touched upon those enormities of Speech which I principally design'd to observe, wherein I have bin far from making a full and exact Catalogue: therefore I would have no man take this little Tract for a just Criterion, by which to try himself in reference to his words. Yet God grant that all that read it, may be able to approve themselves even by this imperfect essay: and he that do's so, makes fair approaches towards being *that perfect man* St. *James* speaks of, chap. 3. 1. These being such faults of the Tongue as are the harder to avoid, because they are every day exemplified to us in common practice, (nay some of them recommended as reputable and ingenious.) And it is a strange insinulative power which example and custom have upon us. We see it in every trivial secular instance, in our very habit: those dresses which we laugh at in our forefathers wardrobes or pictures, when by the circulation of time and vanity they are brought about, we think very becoming. 'Tis the same in  
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our diet: our very palates conform to the fashion, and every thing grows amiable to our fancies, according as 'tis more or less received in the world. And upon this account all sobriety and strict vertue lies now under a heavy prejudice, and no part of it more, then this of the Tongue, which custom has now enfranchized from all the bonds Moralists or Divines had laid upon it.

2. But the greater the difficulties are, the more it ought to awake our diligence: if we lie loose and carelessly, 'tis odds we shall be carried away with the stream. We had need therefore fix our selves, and by a sober recollection of the ends for which our Speech was given us, and the account we must one day give of it, impress upon our selves the baseness and the danger of misemploying it. Yet a negative innocence will not serve our turns, 'twill but put us in the condition of him, *who wrapt up the talent he was commanded to employ*, Mat. 25. 25. Nay indeed 'twill be impossible to preserve even that if we aspire no farther. The Tongue is a busie active Part, will scarce be kept from motion: and therefore if that activity be not determin'd to good objects

objects, 'twill be practicing upon bad. And indeed I believe a great part of its licentiousness is owing to this very thing. There are so few good themes of discourse in use, that many are driven to the ill for want of better. Learning is thought Pedantic, Agriculture Peasant-like, and Religion the most insufferable of all: so by excluding all usefull subjects of converse, we come together as *St. Paul* (in another case) saies, *Not for the better but for the worse*, 1. Cor. 11. 17. And if the Philosopher thought he had lost that day wherein he had not learnt something worthy his notice, how many daies do we worse then lose, by having them not only empty of solid useful acquisitions, but full of noxious and pernicious ones? And indeed if they be the one, they will not miss to be the other also: for the mind is like the stomach, which if it be not supplied with wholesome nourishment, will at last suck in those humors with which the body most abounds. So that if in our converse we do not interchange sober usefull notions, we shall at the best but traffique toies and baubles, and most commonly infection and poison. He therefore that would keep his  
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tongue from betraying himself or others to sin, must tune it to a quite contrary Key, make it an instrument, and incentive to vertue, by which he shall not only secure the negative part of his duty, but comply with the positive also, in employing it to those uses for which it was given him.

3. IT would be too vast an undertaking to prescribe the particular subjects of such discourse, nay indeed impossible, because many of them are occasional, such as cannot aforehand be reduced to any certain account. This only in the general we may rest upon, that all speech tending to the Glory of God or the good of man, is aright directed. Which is not to be understood so restrictively, as if nothing but Divinity or the necessary concerns of human life, may lawfully be brought into discourse: something is to be indulged to common civility, more to the intimacies and endearments of friendship, and a competency to those recreative discourses which maintain the cherefulness of society; all which are, if moderately used, within the latitude of the rule, as tending (tho in a lower degree) to the well-being of men, and by consequent to the

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honor of God, who indulges us those innocent refreshments. But if the subordinate uses come to encroach upon the higher, if we dwell here and look no farther, they then become very sinful by the excess, which were not so in their nature. That inordinacy sets them in opposition to Gods designation, in which they were allowed only a secondary place. We should therefore be careful to improve all opportunities of letting our tongues pay their more immediate homage to God, in the duties of prayers and praises, making them not only the interpreters of our pious affections, but the promoters of the like in others. And indeed he can scarce be thought in earnest, who praises, *Hallowed be thy name*, and do's not as much endeavor it with men, as he solicites it from God.

4. AND if we answer our obligations in this point, we shall in it discharge the highest part of our duty to man also: for in whose heart soever we can implant a true reverential awe of God, we sow the seed of immortality, of an endless happy being, the greatest the most superlative good whereof he is capable. Besides in the interim, we do by it help to manumit and

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release him from those servile drudgeries to vice, under which those remain who live without God in the world. And these indeed are benefits worthy the dignity of human nature to communicate. And it is both sad and strange to see among the multitude and variety of Leagues that are contracted in the world, how few there are of these pious combinations; how those who shew themselves concern'd in all the petty secular interests of their friends, never take this at all into their care; a pregnant evidence how little true friendship there is among men.

5. I know some think they sufficiently excuse themselves when they shift off this office to Divines, whose peculiar business they say it is. But this is as if one who sees a poor fainting wretch, should forbear to administer a Cordial he has at hand, for fear of intrenching on the Physicians Faculty. Many opportunities a Friend or Companion may have which a Divine may want. He often sees a man in the very fit, and so may more aptly apply: for where there is an intimacy of Converse, men lay themselves open, discover those passions, those vices, which they carefully veil when

a strange, or severer eie approaches. Besides, as such a one may easier discern the disease, so he has better advantages for administring remedies: so Children will not take those Medicines from the Doctors hand, which they will from a Nurse or Mother: and we are usually too Childish in what relates to our Souls; look on good counsel from an Ecclesiastic as a Divinity Potion, and set our stomachs against it; but a Familiar may insensibly insinuate it into us, and ere we are aware beguile us into health. Yet if Lay Persons will needs give the Clergy the inclosure of this office, they should at least withdraw those impediments they have laid in their way, by depositing those prejudices which will certainly frustrate their endeavor. Men have in these later daies bin taught to look on Preaching as a thing of form to the Hearers, and of profit only to the Speakers, a *craft whereby, as Demetrius saies, They get their living.* Acts 16. 25. But admit it were so in this last respect, yet it do's not infer. it should be so in the former. If it be a Trade, 'twas sure thought (as in all Ages but this) a very useful one, or else there would never have bin such incouragement



agement given to it. No state ever allotted public certain Salaries for a set of Men that were thought utterly useless: and if there be use to be made of them, shall we lose our advantages merely because they gain theirs? We are in nothing else so senseless, no man will refuse counsel from a Physician, because he lives by the Profession. 'Tis rather an argument on his side, that because such an interest of his own depends on it, he has bin the more industrious to fit himself for it. But not to run farther in this digression, I shall apply it to my purpose, by making this equitable proposal, that Lay men will not so moralize the common Fable, as neither to admonish one another themselves, nor suffer Ministers to do it without them. And truly 'tis hard if neither of these can be granted when both ought. I am sure all is little enough that can be don, tho we should have, as the Prophet speaks, *Precept upon precept, Line upon Line, here a little and there a little*, *Is.* 28. 13. Mans nature is so unattentive to good, that there can scarce be too many monitors. We see *Satan* tho he have a much stronger party in our inclinations, dares not rely upon it, but is still  
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employing his emissaries, to confirm and excite them: and if whilst he has so many Agents among us, God shall have none, we are like to give but an ill account of our zeal either to God or our neighbor, or of those tongues which were given us to glorify the one, and benefit the other. Indeed without this, our greatest officiousness in the secular concerns of others is no kindness. When we strive to advance the fame, to increase the fortune of a wicked man, what do we in it; but enable him to do the more mischiefs, by his wealth to foment his own luxuries, and by his reputation commend them to the practice of others? He only makes his friend truly rich and great, who teaches him to employ those advantages aright; and would men turn their tongues to this sort of Oratory, they would indeed shew they understood for what ends they were given them.

6. BUT as all good receives enhancement from its being more diffusive, so these attempts should not be confined to some one or two intimates or relatives, but be as extensive as the common needs, or at least as our opportunities. 'Tis a generous ambition to benefit many, to oblige

lige communities: which can no way so well be don, as by endeavoring to subvert vicious customs, which are the pests and poisons of all societies. The heathens had many ceremonies of lustrations for their cities and countries, but he that could purify and refine their manners, would indeed attain to the substance of those shadows. And because the Apostle tells us, that *Evil words corrupt good manners*, 1 Cor. 15. 33. 'twould be a fundamental piece of reformation, to introduce a better sort of converse into the world: which is an instance so agreeable to my present subject, that I cannot Close more pertinently, then to commend the endeavor to the Reader; who if he have bin by this Tract at all convinced of the sin and mischief of those Schemes of discourse deciphered in it, cannot be more just to his convictions, then by attempting to supplant them.

7. IT were indeed a design worthy of a noble soul, to try to new model the Age in this particular, to make it possible for men to be at once conversable and innocent. I know 'twill be objected, 'tis too vast a project for one or many single Persons to undertake: yet difficulties use to animate generous spirits,  
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especially when ( as here ) the very attempt is laudable. But as *Christ* saies of Wisdom, so may we of Courage, The Children of this world are more daring then the Children of light. The great corrupters of discourse have not bin so distrustful of themselves: for 'tis visible to any that will reflect, that 'tis within mans memory since much of this monstrous exorbitancy of discourse grew in fashion, particularly the Atheistical and Blasphemous. The first propugners of it were but few, and durst then but whisper their black rudiments: yet the world now sees what a harvest they have from their devilish industry.

8. AND shall we give over our Clime as forlorn and desperate, and conclude that nothing which is not venemous will thrive in our Soil? Would some of parts and authority but make the experiment, I cannot think that all places are yet so viated, but that they may meet with many, who would relish sober and ingenuous discourse, and by their example be animated to propagate it to others: but as long as Blasphemy, Ribaldry, and Detraction set up for Wit, and carry it without any competition, we do implicitly yield

yield that title we dispute not: and 'tis hard to say, whether their triumphs be more owing to the boldness of ill men, or the pusillanimity of the good. What if upon the trial they should meet with the worser part of St. *Paul's* fate at Athens, *That some will mock*, Acts 17. 32. yet perhaps they may partake of the better also, and find others that would be willing to *bear them again*, and some few at least *may cleave unto them*. And sure they are too tender and delicate, that will run no hazard, nor be willing to bear a little share in that profane drollery, with which an Apostle was, and their God is daily assaulted: especially when by this exposing themselves, they may hope to give some check to that impious liberty. However besides the satisfaction of their own consciences, they may also gain this advantage by the attempt, that it may be a good test by which to try their company. For those whom they find impatient of innocent and profitable converse, they may assure themselves can only ensnare not benefit them; and he is a very weak Gamester, that will be drawn to play upon such terms as make it highly probable for him to lose, but impossible for

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him to win. Therefore in that case the advice of *Solomon* is very proper, *Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not in him the lips of Knowledge*, Prov. 14. 7.

9. BUT he that will undertake so Heroic an enterprize, must qualify himself for it, by being true to his own pretensions. He must leave no uneven thread in his loom, or by indulging to any one sort of reprobable discourse himself, defeat all his endeavors against the rest. Those æry Speculators that have writ of the Philosophers Stone, have required many Personall qualifications, strict abstinences and purities in those who make the experiment. The thing may have this sober application, that those who would turn this Iron Age into Gold, that would convert our rusty drossy Converse into a purer strein, must be perfectly clean themselves. For alas what effect can that man hope from his most zealous reprehensions, who laies himself open to recrimination? He that hears a man bitterly inveigh against blasphemy and profaneness, and (yet in that almost the same breath) hears his monitor inveigh as bitterly against his Neighbor, will scarce think

think him a good guide of his tongue, that has but half the mastery of his own. Let every man therefore be sure to begin at the right end of his work, to wash his own mouth clean, before he prescribe Gargarisms to others. And to that purpose let him impartially reflect on all the undue liberties he has given his tongue, whether those which have bin here remarked, or those others which he may find in all Practical books, especially in (the most practical of all books) his own Conscience. And when he has trac'd his talk thro all its wild rambles, let him bring home his stray; not like the lost sheep with joy, but with tears of penitence and contrition, and keep a strict watch over it that break not loose again; nay farther require it to make some restitution for the trespass it has committed in its former excursions: to restore to God what it has rob'd of his Honor, by devoting it self an instrument of his service; to his Neighbor what it has detracted from him, by wiping off that sullage it has cast upon his Fame; and to himself by defacing those ill Characters of vanity and folly it has imprinted on him. Thus may the Tongue cure its own

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sting, and by a kind of Sympathetic virtue, the wound may be healed by dressing the weapon. But alas when we have don all, the Tongue is so slippery that it will often be in danger to deceive our watch: nay it has a secret intelligence with the heart, which like a corrupted Goaler is too apt to connive at its escape. Let us therefore strengthen our guards, call in him who sees all the secret practices of our trecherous hearts, and commit both them and our tongues to his custody. Let us say with the Psalmist, *Try me, O Lord, and seek the ground of my heart*, Psa. 229. 23. And with him again, *Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, and keep the door of my lips, O let not my heart be inclined to any evil thing*, Psa. 141. 3. And if hands thus join in hand, Prov. 16. 5. if Gods grace be humbly invoked, and our own endeavour honestly employed, even this *unruly evil* of the Tongue (as S. James calls it) Chap. 3. 8. may be in some degree tamed. If now and then it get a little out by stealth, yet it will not like the Demoniack be so raving, as quite to break all its chains. If we cannot alwaies secure our selves from inadvertence and surprize, but that a forbidden word may sometimes e-  
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scape us, yet we may from deliberate will-full offences of the Tongue. And tho we should all aspire higher, yet if we can but reach this, we ought not to excuse our selves (upon remaining infirmities) from the Christian generous undertaking, I was recommending, the reforming of others. Indeed I had made a very impertinent exhortation to that, if this degree of fitness may not be admitted; for I fear there would be none upon earth could attempt it upon other terms: the world must still remain as it is, and await only the Tongues of Angels to reduce it. Nor need we fear that censure of Hypocrisy which we find, Mat. 7. 5. for the case is very differing. 'Tis indeed as ridiculous as insolent an attempt; for one that has a Beam in his own eye, to pretend to cast a Mote out of his brothers: but it holds not on the contrary, that he that has a Mote in his own, should not endeavor to remove the Beam in his Brothers. Every speck do's not blind a man, nor do's every infirmity make one unable to discern, or incompetent to reprove the grosser faults of others.

10. YET after all let us as much as is possible clear our eies even of this mote, and make our Copy as worth transcribing as we can: for certainly the best instrument of reformation is example: and tho admonition may sometimes be necessary, yet there are many circumstances required to the right ordering of that, so that it cannot alwaies be practicable, but a good example ever is. Besides it has a secret magnetic vertue: like the Loadstone it attracts by a power of which we can give no account: so that it seems to be one of those occult qualities, those secrets in nature, which have puzzled the enquirers, only experience demonstrates it to us. I am sure it do's (too abundantly) in ill examples, and I doubt not, might do the like in good, if they were as plentifully experimented. And that they may be so, let every man be ambitious to cast in his mite: for tho two make but a farthing, yet they may be multiplied to the vastest sum. However if a man cannot reform others, yet I am sure 'twill be worth his while, so to *save himself from this untoward generation*, Act. 2. 40. I have now presented the Tongue under a double

double aspect, such as may justify the ancient Definition of it, that it is the worst and best part of man, the best in its original and design, and the worst in its corruption and degeneration. In David the man after Gods heart it was his glory, Psal. 57. 8. *The best member that he had*; Psal. 108. 1. *But in the wicked it cuts like a sharp Razor*, Psal. 25. 2. *'Tis as the venom of Asps* 140. 3. The Tongues from heaven were *Cloven* Act. 2. 2. to be the more diffusive of good: but those that are *fired from hell* are forked, Jam. 3. 6. to be the more impressive of mischief: it must be referred to every mans choice, into which of the forms he will mold his. Solomon tells us *Death and Life are in the power of the Tongue*, and that not only directly in regard of the good or ill we may do to others, but reflexively also, in respect of what may rebound to our selves. \*Let *Moses* then make the inference from *Solomons* premises, *Therefore chuse life*, Deut. 30. 15. a proposal so reasonable, so agreeable to nature, that no flourish can render it more inviting. I shall therefore leave it to the Readers contemplation, and shall hope that if he please but to revolve

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revolve it with that seriousness which the importance exacts, he will new set his tongue, compose it to those pious Divine strains, which may be a proper prelude to those Allelujahs he hopes eternally to sing.

**FINIS.**

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*The lovely Oracles given to us.  
or  
The Christians birthright & due: in the  
custody, & use of the holy Scripture.*

THE  
Lively Oracles given to us

OR

The Christians Birth-right and Duty, in  
the custody and use of the

HOLY SCRIPTURE.

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By the Author of the WHOLE DUTY  
OF MAN, &c.

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*Search the Scriptures, Jo. 5. 39.*

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At the THEATER in OXFORD, 1678.



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# THE PREFACE.

**I***N the Treatise of the Government of the Tongue publisht by me heretofore, I had occasion to take notice among the exorbitances of that unruly part, which sets on fire the whole course of nature, and its self is set on fire from hell, Jam. 3. 6. of the impious vanity prevailing in this Age, whereby men play with sacred things, and exercise their wit upon those Scriptures by which they shall be judg'd at the last day, Joh. 12. 48.*

*But that holy Book not only suffering by the petulancy of the Tongue, but the malice of the heart, out of the abundance whereof the mouth speaks, Mat. 12. 34. and also from that irreligion, prepossession, and supiness, which the pursuit of sensual*

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*sual pleasures certainly produces ; the mischief is too much diffus'd , and deeply rooted , to be controul'd by a few casual reflections. I have therefore thought it necessary , both in regard of the dignity and importance of the subject , as also the prevalence of the opposition , to attempt a profest and particular vindication of the holy Scriptures , by displaying their native excellence and beauty ; and enforcing the veneration and obedience that is to be paid unto them.*

*This I design'd to do in my usual method , by an address to the affections of the Reader ; soliciting the several passions of love , hope , fear , shame and sorrow , which either the majesty of God in his sublime being , his goodness deriv'd to us , or our ingratitude return'd to him , could actuate in persons not utterly obdurate.*

*But whereas men , when they have learnt*  
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to do amiss, quickly dispute and dictate; I found my self concern'd to pass sometimes within the verge of controversy, and to discourse upon the principles of reason, and deductions from Testimony, which in the most important transactions of human life are justly taken for evidence. In which whole performance I have studied to avoid the entanglements of Sophistry, and the ambition of unintelligible quotations; and kept my self within the reach of the unlearned Christian Reader; to whose uses, my labors have bin ever dedicated.

All that I require, is that men would bring as much readiness to entertain the holy Scriptures, as they do to the reading profane Authors; I am asham'd to say, as they do to the incentives of vice and folly, nay, to the libels and invectives that are level'd against the Scriptures.

If I obtain this, I will make no doubt  
that

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*that I shall gain a farther point; that from the perusal of my imperfect conceptions, the Reader will proceed to the study of the Scriptures themselves: there taste and see how gracious the Lord is, Ps. 34. 8. and as the Angel commanded Saint John, Rev. 10. 9. eat the Book; where he will experimentally find the words of David verified, Ps. 19. 7. The Law of the Lord is an undefiled Law, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, and giveth wisdom to the simple. The Statutes of the Lord are right; and rejoice the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, and giveth light to the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean and endureth for ever, the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold, sweeter also than honey and the honey-comb. More-*  
over

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over by them is thy servant taught, and in keeping of them there is great reward.

*It is said of Moses, Ex. 34. 29. that having receiv'd the Law from God, and convers'd with him in Mount Sina forty daies together, his face shone, and had a brightness fixt upon it that dazzled the beholders; a pledg and short essay not only of the appearance at Mount Tabor, Mat. 17. 1. where at the Transfiguration he again was seen in glory: but of that greater, and yet future change when he shall see indeed his God face to face, and share his glory unto all eternity. The same divine Goodness gives still his Law to every one of us. Let us receive it with due regard and veneration; converse with him therein, instead of forty daies, during our whole lives; and so anticipate and certainly assure our interest in that great Transfiguration,*

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*when all the faithful shall put off their mortal flesh, be translated from glory to glory, eternally behold their God, see him as he is, and so enjoy him.*

*Conversation has every where an assimilating power, we are generally such as are the men and Books, and business that we deal with: but surely no familiarity has so great an influence on Life and Manners, as when men hear God speaking to them in his Word. That Word which the Apostle, Heb. 4. 12. declares to be quick and powerful, sharper then any two-edg'd sword; piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

*The time will come when all our Books however recommended, for subtilty of discourse, exactness of method, variety of matter, or elegance of Language; when all*  
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our curious Acts, *like these mention'd* Act. 19. 19. shall be brought forth, and burnt before all men : *When the great Book of nature, and heaven it self shall depart as a scroul roll'd together, Rev. 6. 14. At which important season 'twill be more to purpose, to have studied well, that is, transcrib'd in practice this one Book, then to have run thro all besides.* for then the dead small and great shall stand before God, and the Books shall be open'd, and another Book shall be open'd which is the Book of Life, and the dead shall be judg'd out of those things which were written in the Books, according to their works, Rev. 20. 12.

*In vain shall men allege the want of due conviction, that they did not know how penal it would be, to disregard the Sanctions of Gods Law, which they would have had enforc'd by immediat miracle; the*  
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apparition of one sent from the other world, who might testify of the place of torment. This expectation the Scripture charges every where with the guilt of tempting God, and indeed it really involves this insolent proposal, that the Almighty should be oblig'd to break his own Laws, that men might be prevail'd with to keep his. But should he think fit to comply herein, the condescension would be as successless in the event, as 'tis unreasonable in the offer. Our Savior assures, that they who hear not Moses and the Prophets, the instructions and commands laid down in holy Scripture, would not be wrought upon by any other method, would not be perswaded, by that which they allow for irresistible conviction, tho one rose again from the dead, Luke 16. 31.

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THE  
LIVELY ORACLES  
GIVEN TO US,  
Or the Christians Birth-right and Duty  
in the custody and use of the  
HOLY SCRIPTURE.

## SECT. I.

*The several Methods of Gods communicating the knowledg of himself.*

**G**OD, as he is invisible to human eyes, so is he unfathomable by human understandings; the perfection of his nature, and the impotency of ours, setting us at too great a distance to have any clear perception of him. Nay, so far are we from a full comprehension, that we can discern nothing at all of him, but by his own light; those discoveries he hath bin pleas'd to make of himself.

2. **T**HOSE have bin of several sorts; The first was by infusion in mans creation, when

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God interwove into mans very constitution and being the notions and apprehensions of a Deity: and at the same instant when he breath'd into him a living soul, impress on it that native religion, which taught him to know and reverence his Creator, which we may call the instinct of humanity. Nor were those principles dark and confus'd, but clear and evident, proportionable to the ends they were design'd to, which were not only to contemplate the nature, but to do the will of God; practice being even in the state of innocence preferable before an unactive speculation.

3. But this Light being soon eclips'd by *Adams* disobedience, there remain'd to his benighted posterity, only some faint glimmerings, which were utterly insufficient to guide them in their end, without fresh aids, and repeated manifestations of God to them. It pleas'd God therefore to repair this ruine, and by frequent revelations to communicate himself to the Patriarchs in the first Ages of the World; afterwards to Prophets, and other holy men; till at last he reveled himself yet more illustriously in the face of *Jesus Christ* 17 Cent. 4. and said to all as guided by him. This is the true and great comprehensive Revelation wherein all the former were involv'd, and to which they pointed; the whole mystery of Godhead being compris'd in this

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of *Gods* being manifested in the flesh, and the consequents thereof. 1 Tim. 3. 16. whereby our Savior as he effected our reconciliation with God by the sacrifice of his death; so he declar'd both that, and all things else that it concern'd man to know in order to blifs, in his doctrin and holy life. And this *Teacher* being not only sent from God, Jo. 3. but being himself God blessed for ever; it cannot be that his instructions can want any supplement. Yet that they might not want attestation neither to the incredulous world; he confirm'd them by the repeted miracles of his life, and by the testimony of those who saw the more irrefragable conviction of his Resurrection and Ascension. And that they also might not want credit and enforcement, the holy Spirit set to his seal, and by his miraculous descent upon the Apostles, both asserted their commission, and enabled them for the discharge of it, by all gifts necessary for the propagating the Faith of Christ over the whole World.

5. THESE were the waies by which God was pleased to revele himself to to the Forefathers of our Faith; and that not only for their sakes, but ours also, to whom they were to derive those divine dictats they had receiv'd. Saint *Stephen* tells us, those under the Law receiv'd the lively Oracles to deliver down to their posterity, Act. 7. 38. And those un-

der the Gospel, who receiv'd yet more lively Oracles, from him who was both the Word and the Life, did it for the like purpose; to transmit it to us upon whom the ends of the world are come. By this all need of repeted Revelations is superseded, the faithful deriving of the former, being sufficient to us for *all things that pertain to life and godliness*, 2 Pet. 1. 3.

6. AND for this, God (whose care is equal for all successions of men) hath graciously provided, by causing Holy Scriptures to be writ; by which he hath deriv'd on every succeeding Age the illuminations of the former. And for that purpose endowed the Writers not only with that moral fidelity requisite to the truth of History, but with a divine Spirit, proportionable to the great design of fixing an immutable rule for Faith and Manners. And to give us the fuller security herein, he has chosen no other penmen of the New Testament, then those who were the first oral Promulgers of our Christian Religion; so that they have left to us the very same doctrin they taught the Primitive Christians; and he that acknowledges them divinely inspir'd in what they preach'd, cannot doubt them to be so in what they writ. So that we all may enjoy virtually and effectively that wish of the devout Father, who desir'd to be Saint *Pauls* Auditor: for he  
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that hears any of his Epistles read, is as really spoke to by Saint *Paul*, as those who were within the sound of his voice. *Thus God who in times past spake at sundry times, and in diverse manners to our Fathers by the Prophets, and in the later daies by his son*, Heb. 1, 1, 2. continues still to speak to us by these inspir'd Writers; and what Christ once said to his Disciples in relation to their preaching, is no less true of their writings: *He that despiseth you, despiseth me*, Luk. 10. 16. All the contempt that is at any time flung on these sacred Writings, rebounds higher, and finally devolves on the first Author of those doctrines, whereof these are the Registres and Transcripts.

7. B U T this is a guilt which one would think peculiar to Infidels and Pagans, and not incident to any who had in their Baptism list themselves under Christs banner: yet I fear I may say, of the two parties, the Scripture has met with the worst treatment from the later. For if we measure by the frequency and variety of injuries. I fear Christians will appear to have out-vied Heathens: These bluntly disbelieve them, neglect, nay perhaps scornfully deride them. Alas, Christians do this and more; they not only put contemts, but tricks upon the Scripture, wrest and distort it to justify all their wild phancies, or secular designs; and suborn its Patronage to those things it forbids, and tells us that God abhors.

8. INDEED so many are the abuses we offer it, that he that considers them would scarce think we own'd it for the words of a sensible man, much less of the great omniscient God. And I believe 'twere hard to assign any one so comprehensive and efficacious cause of the universal depravation of manners, as the disvaluing of this divine Book, which was design'd to regulate them. It were therefore a work worthy another inspired writing, to attempt the rescue of this, and recover it to its just estimate. Yet alas, could we hope for that, we have scoffers who would as well despise the New as the Old; and like the Husbandmen in the Gospel, *Mat. 21. 36.* would answer such a succession of messages by repeating the same injuries.

9. To such as these 'tis I confess vain for man to address; nay 'twere insolence to expect that human Oratory should succeed where the divine fails; yet the spreading infection of these renders it necessary to administer antidotes to others. And besides, tho' (God be blest) all are not of this form, yet there are many who, tho' not arriv'd to this contempt, yet want some degrees of that just reverence they owe the sacred Scriptures, who give a confus'd general assent to them as the word of God, but afford them not a consideration and respect answerable to such an acknowledgment. To such as these, I shall hope  
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it may not be utterly vain to attempt the exciting of those drowsy notions that lie unactive in them, by presenting to them some considerations concerning the excellence and use of the Scripture: which being all but necessary consequences of that principle they are supposed to own, *viz.* that they are Gods word; I cannot much question their assent to the speculative part: I wish I could as probably assure my self of the practice.

10. INDEED were there nothing else to be said in behalf of holy Writ, but that it is Gods word, that were enough to command the most awful regard to it. And therefore it is but just we make that the first and principal consideration in our present discourse. But then 'tis impossible that that can want others to attend it; since whatsoever God saies, is in all respects completely good. I shall therefore to that of its divine original add secondly the consideration of its subject Matter; thirdly, of its excellent and no-less diffusive end and design; and fourthly, of its exact propriety and fitness to that design, which are all such qualifications, that where they concur, nothing more can be requir'd to commend a writing to the esteem of rational men. And upon all these tests, notwithstanding the cavil of the Romanists and others, whose force we shall examin with the unhappy issue of contrary counsels, this law of God will

will be found to answer the Psalmist's character of it, *Pf. 19. 7. The Law of God is perfect*: and 'twill appear that the custody and use thereof, is the Birth-right and Duty of every Christian. All which severals being faithfully deduced; it will only remain that I add such cautions as will be necessary to the due performance of the aforesaid duty; and our being in som degree render'd perfect, as this Law of God, and the Author thereof himself is perfect, *Mat. 5. 48.*

**SECT.**



## S E C T. II.

*The divine Original, Endearments, and Authority of the Holy Scripture.*

**M**ENS judgments are so apt to be biast by their affection, that we often find them readier to consider who speaks, then what is spoken: a temper very unsafe, and the principle of great injustice in our inferior transactions with men; yet here there are very few of us that can wholly divest ourselves of it, whereas, when we deal with God (in whom alone an implicit faith may securely be reposed) we are nice and wary, bring our scales and measures, will take nothing upon his word which holds not weight in our own balance. 'Tis true, he needs not our partiality to be *justified in his sayings*, Psal. 51. 4. *His words are pure, even as the silver tried seven times in the fire*, Psal. 12. 6. able to pass the strictest test that right reason (truly so called) can put them to. Yet it shews a great perverseness in our nature, that we who so easily resign our understandings to fallible men, stand thus upon our guard against God; make him dispute for every inch he gains on us; nor will afford him what we daily grant

to any credible man, to receive an affirmation upon trust of his veracity.

2. I am far from contradicting our Saviors Precept, of *Search the Scriptures*, Jo. 7. or *Saint Pauls*, of *proving all things*, 1 Thes. 5. 21. we cannot be too industrious in our inquest after truth, provided we still reserve to God the decisive vote, and humbly acquiesce in his sense, how distant soever from our own; so that when we consult Scripture ( I may add reason either ) 'tis not to resolve us whether God be to be believed or no in what he has said, but whether he hath said such and such things: for if we are convinc'd he have; reason as well as Religion commands our assent.

3. WHATEVER therefore God has said, we are to pay it a reverence merely upon the account of its Author; over and above what the excellence of the matter exacts: and to this we have all inducements as well as obligation: there being no motives to render the words of men estimable to us, which are not eminently and transcendently applicable to those of God.

4. THOSE motives we may reduce to four: first, the Authority of the Speaker; secondly, his Kindness; thirdly, his Wisdom; and fourthly, his Truth. First, for that of Authority; that may be either native, or acquired; the native is that of a parent, which is such a charm  
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of observance, that we see *Salomon*, when he would impress his counsels, assumes the person of a Father; *Hear O my children the instructions of a Father*, Prov. 4. 1. And generally thro that whole Book he uses the compellation of my Son, as the greatest endearment to engage attention and reverence. Nay so indispensable was the obligation of children in this respect, that we see the contumacious child that would not hearken to the advice of his Parents, was by God himself adjudged to death, *Deut. 21. 20.*

5. NOR have only Gods, but mens Laws exacted that filial reverence to the dictats of Parents. But certainly no Parent can pretend such a title to it as God, who is not only the immediat Father of our persons, but the original Father of our very nature; not only of our flesh, but of our spirits also, *Heb. 12. 9.* So that the Apostles Antithesis in that place is as properly applied to counsels as corrections, and we may as rightly infer, that if we give reverence to the advices of our earthly Parents, *much more ought we subject our selves to this Father of our spirits.* And we have the very same reason wherewith to enforce it: for *the Fathers of our flesh do as often dictate, as correct according to their own pleasures,* prescribe to their children not according to the exact measures of right and wrong, but after that humor which most pre-

dominates in themselves. But God alwaies directs his admonitions to our profit, *that we may be partakers of his holiness*, Heb. 12. 11. So that we are as unkind to our selves, as irreverent towards him, whenever we let any of his words fall to the ground; whose claim to this part of our reverence is much more irrefragable then that of our natural Parents.

6. But besides this native Authority there is also an acquired; and that we may distinguish into two sorts; the one of dominion, the other of reputation. To the first kind belongs that of Princes, Magistrates, Masters, or any that have coercive power over us. And our own interest teaches us not to slight the words of any of these; who can so much to our cost second them with deeds. Now God has all these titles of jurisdiction; He is the great King, *Pf. 48. 2.* Nor was it only a complement of the Psalmists; for himself owns the stile, *I am a great King*, Mat. 1. He is the Judge of all the World; Gen. 18. yea, that Ancient of daies, before whom the Books were open'd, *Dan. 7. 10.* He is our Lord and Master by right, both of Creation and Redemption; and this Christ owns even in his state of incarnation; yea, when he was about the most servile imploiment; the washing his Disciples feet; when he was most literally in the form of a servant; yet he scruples not to assert his right to the opposite title, *You call me Master*, and

*and Lord; and ye say well, for so I am; Jo. 13.* Nor are these emty names, but effectively attended with all the power they denote. Yet so stupid are we, that whilst we awfully receive the dictates of our earthly Superiors, we slight and neglect the Oracles of that God who is King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. When a Prince speaks, we are apt to cry out with *Herods Flatterers, the voice of a God, and not of a man, Act. 12.* Yet when it is indeed the voice of God, we chuse tot listen to any thing else rather than it. But let us sadly remember, that notwithstanding our contemts, this word shall (as our Savior tells us) *judge us at the last day, Jo. 12. 38.*

7. A second sort of acquir'd Authority is that of reputation. When a man is famed for som extraordinary excellencies, whether moral or intellectual, men come with appetite to his discourses, greedily suck them in, nor need such a one bespeak attention; his very name has don it for him, and prepossess him of his Auditors regard. Thus the Rabbies among the Jews, the Philosophers among the Greeks, were listened to as Oracles, and to cite them was (by their admiring Disciples) thought a concluding Argument. Nay, under Christianity, this admiration of mens persons has bin so inordinate, that it has crumbled Religion away in little insignificant parties; whilst not only *Paul, Apollo, or Cephas,*

*Cephas*, but names infinitely inferior, have become the distinctive characters of Sects and separate Communions. So easily alas are we charm'd by our prepossessions, and with itching ears run in quest of those doctrines which the fame of their Authors, rather than the evidence of truth, commend to us.

8. AND hath God don nothing to get him a repute among us? has he no excellencies to deserve our esteem? is he not worthy to prescribe to his own creatures? If we think yes, why is he the only person to be disregarded? or why do we so unreasonably depart from our own humor, as not to give his Word a reverence proportionable to that we pretend for him; nay, which we actually pay to men of like passions with our selves? A contempt so absurd as well as impious, that we have not the example of any the most barbarous people to countenance us. For tho some of them have made very wild mistakes in the choice of their Deities, yet they have all agreed in this common principle, that whatever those Deities said, was to be receiv'd with all possible veneration; yea, such a deference gave they to all significations of the divine will, that as they would undertake no great enterprize without consulting their Auguries; so upon any inauspicious signs they relinquish't their attempts. And certainly if we had the same reverence for the true God  
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which they had for the false, we should as frequently consult him. We may do it with much more ease and certainty: we need not trust to the entrails of Beasts, or motion of Birds; we need not go to *Delphos*, or the Lybian *Hammon* for the resolving our doubts; but what *Moses* said to *Israel* is very applicable to us, *the Word is nigh thee*, Deut. 30. 14. That Word which *David* made his *Counsellor*, Psal. 119. 24. his *Comforter*, ver. 50. his *Treasure*, ver. 72. his *Study* ver. 99. And had we those awful apprehensions of God which he had, we should pay the like reverence to his Word. Did we well ponder how many titles of Authority he has over us, we should surely be asham'd to deny that respect to him in whom they all conspire; which we dare not deny to them separately in human Superiors.

9. A second motive to esteem mens words, is the kindness of the speaker. This has such a fascinating power, as nothing but extreme ill nature can resist. When a man is assur'd of the kindness of him that speaks, whatever is spoken is taken in good part. This is it that distinguishes the admonitions of a friend from the reproches of an enemy; and we daily in common conversation receive those things with contentment and applause from an intimate and familiar, which if spoken by a stranger or enemy would be despis'd

despis'd or stomach'd. So insinuating a thing is kindness, that where it has once got it self believ'd, nothing it saies after is disputed; it supples the mind, and makes it ductile and pliant to any impressions.

10. BUT what human kindness is there that can come in any competition with the Divine? it surpasses that of the nearest and dearest relations; *Mothers may forget, yet will I not forget thee*, Isa. 49. 15. And the Psalmist found it experimentally true, *When my Father and my Mother forsake me, the Lord taketh me up*, Ps. 27. 10. The tenderest bowels compared to his, are adamant and flint: so that 'tis a most proper epithet the Wise man gives him; *O Lord thou lover of souls*, Wis. 11. 26. Nor is this affection merely mental, but it attests it self by innumerable effects. The effects of love are all reducible to two heads, doing and suffering; and by both these God has most eminently attested his love to us.

11. FOR the first, we cannot look either on our bodies or our souls, on the whole Universe about us, or that better World above us; but we shall in each see *the Lord hath don great things for us*, Psal. 114. Nay, not only our enjoyments, but even the capacity to enjoy, is his bounty. Had not he drawn mankind out of his original clay, what had we bin concern'd in all the other works of his Creation? So that if we put any value either upon what



we have or what we are, we cannot but account our selves so much indebted to this his active love. And tho the passive was not practicable by the divine Nature simply and apart, yet that we might not want all imaginable evidences of his love, he who was God blessed for ever, linkt his impassible to our passible nature; assum'd our humanity, that he might espouse our sorrows, and was born on purpose that he might die for us. So that sure we may say in his own words, *greater love then this hath no man*, Jo. 15, 13.

12. AND now 'tis very hard, if such an unparallel'd love in God, may not as much affect us as the slight benefactions of every ordinary friend; if it cannot so much recommend him to our regard, as to rescue his word from contempt, and dispose us to receive impressions from it; especially when his very speaking is a new act of his kindness, and design'd to our greatest advantage.

13. BUT if all he has don and suffer'd for us cannot obtain him so much from us, we must surely confess, our disingenuity is as superlative as his love. For in this instance we have no plea for our selves. The discourses of men, 'tis true, may sometime be so weak and irrational, that tho kindness may suggest pity, it cannot reverence: But this can never happen in God, whose wisdom is as infinite as his love. He talks not at our vain rate who  
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often talk only for talkings sake ; but his words are directed to the most important ends, and addrest in such a manner as befits him in whom are *all the treasures of wisdom and knowledg*, Col. 2. And this is our third consideration, the wisdom of the Speaker.

14. How attractive a thing Wisdom is, we may observe in the instance of *the Queen of Sheba*, who came from the utmost parts of the earth, as Christ saies, Mat. 12. 42. *to hear the Wisdom of Solomon*. And the like is noted of the Greek Sages, that they were addrest to from all parts, by persons of all ranks and qualities, to hear their Lectures. And indeed the rational nature of man do's by a kind of sympathetic motion close with whatever hath the stamp of reason upon it. But alas, what is the profoundest wisdom of men, compar'd with that of God ? He is the essential reason ; and all that man can pretend to, is but an emanation from him ; a ray of his Sun, a drop of his Ocean : which as he gives, so he can also take away. He can infatuate the most subtil designers ; And (as he saies of him self) *makes the diviners mad ; turns the wise men back, and makes their wisdom foolishness*, Esay 44. 25.

15. How impious a folly is it then in us, to Idolize human Wisdom with all its imperfections, and despise the divine ? yet this every man is guilty of, who is not attracted to the study

study of sacred Writ by the supereminent wisdom of its Author. For such men must either affirm that God has not such a supereminency; or that, tho he have in himself, he hath noth exerted it in this writing: The former is down-right blasphemy; and truly the later is the same, a little varied. For that any thing but what is exactly wise, can proceed from infinite wisdom, is too absurd for any man to imagin. And therefore he that charges Gods Word with defect of wisdom, must interpretatively charge God so too. For tho 'tis true, a wise man may somtimes speak foolishly; yet that happens thro that mixture of ignorance or passion, which is in the most knowing of mortals: but in God, who is a pure Act, and essential Wisdom, that is an impossible supposition.

16. NAY, indeed it were to tax him of folly beyond what is incident to any sensible man, who will still proportion his instruments to the work he designs. Should we not conclude him mad, that should attempt to fell a mighty Oak with a Pen-knife, or stop a Torrent with a wisp of Straw? And sure their conceptions are not much more reverend of God, who can suppose that a writing design'd by him for such important ends, as the *making men wise unto salvation*, 2 Tim. 3. 15. *the casting down all that exalts it self against the obedience of Christ*, 2 Cor. 10. 5. should it self be foolish

and weak: or that he should give it those great Attributes of being *sharper then a two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, of the joints and marrow.* Heb. 4. 14. if its discourses were so flat and insipid, as som in this profane Age would represent them.

17. **T**IS true indeed, 'tis not as the Apostle speaks, the *wisdom of this world*. 1 Cor. 2. 6. The Scripture teaches us not the arts of undermining Governments, defrauding and circumventing our brethren; but it teaches us that which would tend much more even to our temporal felicity; and as reason prompts us to aspire to happiness, so it must acknowledg, that is the highest wisdom which teaches us to attain it.

18. **A**ND as the Holy Scripture is thus recommended to us by the wisdom of its Author; so in the last place is it by his truth, without which the other might rather raise our jealousy then our reverence. For wisdom without sincerity degenerates into serpentine guile; and we rather fear to be ensnar'd then hope to be advantag'd by it. The most subtil addresses, and most cogent arguments prevail not upon us, where we suspect som insidious design. But where wisdom and fidelity meet in the same person, we do not only attend, but confide in his counsels, And this qualification is most eminently in God. *The children*

*children of men are deceitful upon the weights,* Psal. 62. 9. Much guile often lurks indiscernibly under the fairest appearances: but Gods veracity is as essentially himself, as his wisdom, and he can no more deceive us, then he can be deceiv'd himself. *He is not man that he should die,* Num. 23. 19. He designs not (as men often do) to sport himself with our credulity; and raise hopes which he never means to satisfy; *he saies not to the seed of Jacob, seek ye me in vain,* Ex. 45. 19. but all his promises are yea and Amen, 2 Cor. 1. 20. He is perfectly sincere in all the proposals he makes in his Word: which is a most rational motive for us to advert to it, not only with reverence but love.

19, A N D now when all these motives are thus combined; the authority, the kindness, the wisdom, the veracity of the speaker, what can be requir'd more to render his words of weight with us? If this four-fold cord will not draw us, we have sure the strength, not of men, but of that Legion we read of in the Gospel, *Mar. 5. 9.* For these are so much the cords of a man, so adapted to our natures, nay to our constant usage in other things, that we must put off much of our humanity, disclaim the common measures of mankind, if we be not attracted by them. For I dare appeal to the breast of any sober, industrious man, whether in case a person, who he were  
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sure had all the fore-mention'd qualifications, should recommend to him some rules as infallible for the certain doubling, or trebling his estate, he would not think them worth the pursuing; nay, whether he would not plot and study on them, till he comprehended the whole Art. And shall we then when God in whom all those qualifications are united, and that in their utmost transcendencies, shall we, I say, think him below our regard, when he proposes the improving our interests, not by the scanty proportions of two or three; but in such as he intimated to *Abraham*, when he shewed him the Stars, as the representative of his numerous off-spring, *Gen. 15. 5.* when he teaches us that highest, and yet most certain Alchemy, of refining and multiplying our enjoiments, and then perpetuating them?

20. ALL this God do's in Scripture; and we must be stupidly improvident, if we will take no advantage by it. It was once the complaint of Christ to the Jews, *I am come in my Fathers name and ye receive me not, if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive, Jo. 5: 43.* And what was said by him the eternal essential Word, is no less applicable to the written; which coming in the name, and upon the message of God, is despis'd and slighted, and every the lightest composure of men preferr'd before it. As if that signature  
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of Divinity it carries, served rather as a Brand to stigmatize and defame, then adorn and recommend it. A content which strikes immediately at God himself, whose resentments of it, tho' for the present suppressed by his long-suffering, will at last break out upon all who persevere so to affront him, in a *judgment worthy of God*, Wis. 12. 26.

21. BUT after all that has bin said, I foresee som may say, that I have all this while but beaten the air, have built upon a principle which som flatly deny, others doubt of, and have run away with a supposition that the Bible is of divine Original, without any attempt of proof. To such as these I might justly enough object the extreme hard measure they offer to Divinity above all other Sciences. For in those, they still allow som fundamental maxims, which are presupposed without proof; but in this they admit of no *Postulata*, no granted principle on which to superstruct. If the same rigor should be extended to secular cases, what a damp would it strike upon commerce? For example, a man expects fair dealing from his neighbor, upon the strength of those common notions of Justice he presumes writ in all mens hearts: but according to this measure, he must first prove to every man he deals with, that such notions there are, and that they are obligatory: that the wares expos'd to sale are his own; that domi-  
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tion is not founded in grace, or that he is in that state, and so has a property to confer upon another; that the person dealt with, paises a just price; do's it in good money; and that it is his own; or that he is in the state of grace; or needs not be so, to justify his purchase: and at this rate the Market will be as full of nice questions as the Scholes. But because complaints and retortions are the common refuge of causes that want better Arguments, I shall not insist here; but to proceed to a defence of the question'd Assertion; that the Bible is the Word of God.

22. IN which I shall proceed by these degrees. First, I shall lay down the plain grounds upon which Christians believe it. Secondly, I shall compare those with those of less credibility which have generally satisfied mankind in other things of the like nature. And thirdly, I shall consider whether those who are dissatisfied with those grounds, would not be equally so with any other way of attestation.

23. BEFORE I enter upon the first of these, I desire it may be consider'd, that matters of fact are not capable of such rigorous demonstrative evidences, as mathematical propositions are. To render a thing fit for rational belief, there is no more requir'd but that the motives for it do over-possess those against it, and in that degree they do so; so is the belief stronger or weaker.

24. Now



24. Now the motives of our belief in the present case, are such as are extrinsic, or intrinsic to the Scriptures; of which the extrinsic are first, and preparative to the other; and indeed all that can reasonably be insisted on to a gain-saier, who must be suppos'd no competent judg of the later. But as to the former, I shall adventure to say, that the divine Original of the Scripture hath as great grounds of credibility as can be expected in any thing of this kind. For whether God inspir'd the Pen-men of Holy Writ, is matter of fact, and being so, is capable of no other external evidence but that of testimony: and that matter of fact being also in point of time so remote from us, can be judg'd of only by a series of Testimonies deriv'd from that Age wherein the Scriptures were written, to this: and the more credible the testifiers, and the more universal the Testimony; so much the more convincing are they to all considering men.

25. AND this attestation the Scripture hath in the highest circumstances, it having bin witness'd to in all Ages, and in those Ages by all persons that could be presum'd to know any thing of it. Thus the Old Testament was own'd by the whole Nation of the Jews, as the writings of men inspir'd by God; and that with such evidence of their mission, as abundantly satisfied those of that Age, of their

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being so inspir'd; and they deriv'd those Writings with that attestation to their posterity. Now that those of the first Ages were not deceiv'd, is as morally certain as any thing can be suppos'd. For in the first part of the Bible is contain'd the history of those miracles wherewith God rescued that people out of *Egypt*, and instated them in *Canaan*. Now if they who liv'd at that time knew that such miracles were never don, 'tis impossible they could receive an evident Fable as an inspir'd truth. No single person, much less a whole Nation can be suppos'd so stupid. But if indeed they were eye-witnesses of those miracles, they might with very good reason conclude, that the same *Moses* who was by God empower'd to work them, was so also for the relating them; as also all those precedent events from the Creation down to that time, which are recorded by him.

26. So also for the preceptive parts of those Books, those that saw those formidable solemnities, with which they were first publish'd, had sure little temptation to doubt that they were the dictats of God, when written. Now if they could not be deceiv'd themselves, 'tis yet less imaginable that they should conspire to impose a cheat upon their posterities; nor indeed were the Jews of so easy a credulity, that 'tis at all probable the succeeding Generations would have bin so impos'd on:

on: their humor was stubborn enough, and the precepts of their Law severe and burdensom enough to have tempted them to have cast off the yolk, had it not bin bound upon them by irresistable convictions of its coming from God. But besides this Tradition of their Elders, they had the advantage of living under a Theocracy, the immediat guidance of God; Prophets daily rais'd up among them, to fore-tell events, to admonish them of their duty, and reprove their backslidings: yet even these gave the deference to the written Word, nay, made it the test by which to try true inspirations from false: *To the Law and to the Testimony; if they speak not according to it, there is no light in them*, Esay 8. 20. So that the veneration which they had before acquir'd, was still anew excited by fresh inspirations, which both attested the old, and became new parts of their Canon.

27. Nor could it be esteem'd a small confirmation to the Scriptures, to find in succeeding Ages the signal accomplishments of those prophecies which were long before registred in those Books; for nothing less then divine Power and Wisdom could foretell, and also verify them. Upon these grounds the Jews universally thro all successions receiv'd the Books of the Old Testament as divine Oracles, and lookt upon them as the greatest trust that could be committed to them:

and accordingly were so scrupulously vigilant in conserving them, that their Manuscripts numbred not only the sections, but the very words, nay letters, that no fraud or inadvertency might corrupt or defalk the least iota of what they esteem'd so sacred. A farther testimony and sepiment to which, were the Samaritan, Chaldee, and Greek versions: which being made use of in the Synagogs of Jews, in their dispersions, and the Samaritans at *Sichem*, could not at those distances receive a uniform alteration, and any other would be of no effect. Add to this, that the Original exemplar of the Law, was laid up in the Sanctuary, that the Prince was to have a Copy of it alwaies by him, and transcribe it with his own hand; that every Jew was to make it his constant discourse and meditation, teach it his children, and wear part of it upon his hands and forehead. And now sure 'tis impossible to imagin any matter of fact to be more carefully deduced, or irrefragably testified, nor any thing believ'd upon stronger evidence.

28. THAT all this is true in reference to the Jews, that they did thus own these Writings as divine, appears not only by the Records of past Ages, but by the Jews of the present, who still own them, and cannot be suspected of combination with the Christians. And if these were reasonable grounds of conviction

yiction to the Jews, (as he must be most absurdly sceptical that shall deny) they must be so to Christians also; who derive them from them: and that with this farther advantage to our Faith, that we see the clear completion of those Evangelical prophecies which remain'd dark to them, and consequently have a farther Argument to confirm us, that the Scriptures of the Old Testament are certainly divine.

29. THE New has also the like means of probation: which as it is a collection of the doctrine taught by Christ and his Apostles, must if truly related be acknowledged no less divine than what they orally deliver'd. So that they who doubt its being divine, must either deny what Christ and his Apostles preach'd to be so, or else distrust the fidelity of the relation: The former strikes at the whole Christian Faith; which if only of men, must not only be fallible, but is actually a deceit, whilst it pretends to be of God, and is not. To such Objectors we have to oppose those stupendious miracles with which the Gospel was attested; such as demonstrated a more than human efficacy. And that God should lend his omnipotence to abet the false pretensions of men, is a conceit too unworthy even for the worst of men to entertain.

30. 'TIS true, there have bin by God permitted

mitted lying miracles; as well as true ones have bin don by him; Such as were those of the Magicians in *Egypt*, in opposition to the other of *Moses*; but then the difference between both was so conspicuous, that he must be more partial and disingenuous, then even those Magicians were, who would not acknowledge the disparity; and confess in those which were truly supernatural, *the finger of God*, *Exod. 8. 19.* Therefore both in the Old and New Testament it is predicted, that *false Prophets should arise, and do signs and wonders*; *Deut. 13. 1. Mat. 24. 11. 24.* as a trial of their fidelity who made profession of Religion; whether they would prefer the few and trivial sleights which recommended a deceiver, before those great and numberless miracles which attested the sacred Oracles deliver'd to the sons of men by the God of truth. Whether the trick of a *Barchochebas*, to hold fire in his mouth; that of *Marcus* the heretic, to make the Wine of the Holy Sacrament appear blood; or that of *Mahomet*, to bring a Pidgeon to his ear, ought to be put in balance against all the miracles wrought by *Moses*, our Savior, or his Apostles. And in a word, whether the silly stories which *Iamblichus* solemnly relates of *Pythagoras*, or those *Philostratus* tells of *Apollonius Tyaneus*, deserve to rival those of the Evangelists. It is a most just judgment, and accordingly threatned by  
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Almighty God, that they who would *not obey the truth should believe a lie*, 2 Thes. 2. 11. But still the Almighty, *where any man or devil do's proudly, is evidently above him*, Exod. 18. 11. *will be justified in his sayings, and be clear when he is judged*, Rom. 3. 4.

31. But if men will be Sceptics, and doubt every thing, they are to know that the matter call'd into question, is of a nature that admits but two waies of solution; probability, and testimony. First for probability, let it be consider'd who were the first promulgers of Christs miracles. In his life time they were either the patients on whom his miracles were wrought, or the common people, that were spectators: the former, as they could not be deceiv'd themselves, but must needs know whether they were cur'd or no; so what imaginable design could they have to deceive others? Many indeed have pretended impotency as a motive of compassion; but what could they gain by owning a cure they had not? As for the Spectators, as their multitude adds to their credibility; (it being morally impossible that so many should at once be deluded in a matter so obvious to their senses) so do's it also acquit them from fraud and combination. Cheats and forgeries are alwaies hatcht in the dark, in close Cabals, and privat Juncto's. That five thousand men at one time, and four thousand at another, should conspire

conspire to say, that they were miraculously fed, when they were not; and all prove true to the fiction, and not betray it: is a thing as irrational to be suppos'd, as impossible to be parallel'd.

32. BESIDES, admit it possible that so many could have join'd in the deceit; yet what imaginable end could they have in it? Had their lie bin subservient to the designs of som potent Prince that might have rewarded it, there had bin som temptation: but what could they expect from the reputed son of a Carpenter, who had not himself where to lay his head? Nay, who disclaim'd all secular power; convey'd himself away from their importunities; when they would have forc'd him to be a King: And consequently, could not be lookt on as one that would head a Sedition, or attempt to raise himself to a capacity of rewarding his Abettors. Upon all these considerations, there appears not the least shadow of probability; that either those particular persons who publish'd the cures they had receiv'd, or those multitudes who were witnesses and divulgers of those, or his other miracles; could do it upon any sinister design, or indeed upon any other motive but gratitude and admiration.

33. In the next place, if we come to those miracles which succeeded Christs death, those most important, and convincing, of his Resur-



surrection and Ascension, and observe who were the divulgers of those, we shall find them very unlikely to be men of design; a set of illiterate men, taken from the Fisher-boats, and other mean occupation: and such as needed a miracle as great as any of those they were to assert (the descent of the Holy Ghost) to fit them for their office. What alas could they drive at, or how could they hope that their testimony could be received, so much against the humor and interest of the present rulers; unless they were assur'd not only of the truth of the things, but also of som supernatural aids to back and fortify them? Accordingly we find, that till they had receiv'd those; till by the descent of the holy Ghost they were *endued with power from on high*, Luk. 24. 49. they never attempted the discovery of what they had seen: but rather hid themselves, kept all their assemblies in privacy and concealment *for the fear of the Jews*, Jo. 20. 19. and so were far enough from projecting any thing beside their own safety. Afterwards, when they began to preach, they had early essays, what their secular advantages would be by it; threatnings and revilings, scourgings and imprisonments, *Act. 4. 20. 5. 18. 40.* And can it be imagined, that men who a little before had shewed themselves so little in love with suffering, that none of them durst stick to their Master at his apprehension, but

one forswore, and all forsook him; can it, I say, be imagin'd that these men should be so much in love with their own Fable, as to venture all sorts of persecution for the propagating it? Or if they could, let us in the next place consider what probability there could be of success.

34. THEIR preaching amounted to no less than the Deifying of one, whom both their Roman and Jewish Rulers, nay, the generality of the people had executed as a malefactor: so that they were all engag'd, in defence of their own Act, to sift their testimony with all the rigor that conscious jealousy could suggest. And where were so many concern'd inquisitors, there was very little hope for a forgery to pass. Besides the avow'd displeasure of their Governors made it a hazardous thing to own a belief of what they asserted. Those that adher'd to them could not but know, that at the same time they must espouse their dangers and sufferings. And men use not to incur certain mischiefs, upon doubtful and suspicious grounds.

35. YET farther, their doctrine was design'd to an end to which their Auditors could not but have the greatest reluctance: they were to struggle with that rooted prepossession which the Jews had for the Mosaical Law, which their Gospel out-dated; and the Gentiles for the Rites and Religion of their Ancestors;

cessors; and, which was harder then either, with the corruptions and vices of both: to plant humility and internal sanctity, so contrary to that ceremonial holiness, upon which the Jews so valued themselves; and despised others: and Temperance, Justice, and Piety; so contrary to the practice, nay, even the religion of the Heathen: and to attempt all this with no other allurements, no other promise of recompence, but what they must attend in another world, and pass too thro reproches and afflictions, torments and death. These were all such invincible prejudices, as they could never hope to break thro with a lie: nay, which they could not have encountered even with every common truth, but only with that, which being divine, brought its aids with it; without which 'twas utterly impossible for all the skill or oratory of men to overcome such disadvantages.

256. And yet with all these did these rude insartificial men contest; and that with signal success: no less then three thousand Profelytes made by Saint Peter's first Sermon; and that in *Jerusalem*, the Scene where all was acted, and consequently where 'twas the most impossible to impose a forgery: And at the like miraculous rate they went on, till as the Pharisees themselves complain, they had filled *Jerusalem* with their doctrine, Acts 5. 28. nor did *Judea* set bounds to them; *their sound went*

out into all nations, Rom. 10. 18. and their doctrine spread it self thro all the Gentile world.

37. AND sure so wonderful an event, so contrary to all human measures, do's sufficiently evince there was more then man in it. Nothing but the same creative Power that produc'd light out of darkness, could bring forth effects so much above the proportion of the cause. Had these weak instruments acted only by their natural powers, nothing of this had bin achiev'd. Alas, could these poor rude men learn all Languages within the space of fifty daies, which would take up almost as many years of the most industrious Student? And yet had they not bin able to speak them, they could never have divulg'd the Gospel to the several Nations, nor so effectually have convinc'd the by-standers, *Act. 2.* that they acted by a higher impulse. Yet to convince the world they did so, they repeated their Masters miracles as well as his doctrine; heal'd the sick, cast out devils, rais'd the dead; And where God communicated so much of his power, we may reasonably conclude he did it to promote his own work, not the work of the Devil, as it must have bin if this whole Scene were a lie.

38. WHEN all this is weigh'd, I presume there will remain little ground to suspect, that the first planters of Christian Faith had any

any other design than what they avowed, viz. the bringing men to holiness here, and salvation hereafter. The suspicion therefore, if any, must rest upon later times; and accordingly som are willing to persuade themselves and others that the whole Scheme of our Religion, is but a lately devis'd Fable to keep the world in awe; whereof Princes have made som use, but Clergy-men more; and that Christ and his Apostles are only actors whom themselves have conjured up upon the Stage to pursue their plot.

39. IN answer to this bold, this blasphemous suggestion, I should first desire these furnisiers to point out the time when, and the persons who began this design; to tell us exactly whence they date this politic Religion, as they are pleas'd to suppose it. If they cannot, they are manifestly unjust to reject our account of it when they can give none themselves; and fail very much of that rigid demonstration they require from others. That there is such a profession as Christianity in the world, is yet ( God be blest ) undeniable; ( tho at the rate it has of late declin'd, God knows how long it will be so. ) we say it came by Christ and his Apostles, and that it is attested by an uninterrupted testimony of all the intervening Ages, the suffrage of all Christian Churches from that day to this. And sure they who embraced the doctrine, are the most



of the persecuting Emperors, & the scoffs and reproches of *Celsus*, *Porphyrie*, *Lucian*, and other profane opposers of this Doctrin, do undeniably assert its being. By all which it appears, that Christianity had in those Ages not only a being, but had also obtain'd mightily in the world, and drawn in vast numbers to its profession; and vast indeed they must needs be, to furnish out that whole Army of Martyrs, of which profane, as well as Ecclesiastic writers speak. And if all this be not sufficient to evince that Christianity stole not clancularly into the world, but took its rise from those times and persons it pretends, we must renounce all faith of testimony, and not believe an inch farther then we see.

41. I suppose I need say no more to shew that the Gospel, and all those portentous miracles which attested it, were no forgeries, or stratagems of men. I come now to that doubt which more immediatly concerns the Holy Scripture, *viz.* whether all these transactions be so faithfully related there, that we may believe them to have bin dictated by the spirit of God. Now for this, the process need be but short, if we consider who were the penmen of the New Testament; even for the most part the Apostles themselves: *Matthew*, and *John* who wrote two of the Gospels, were certainly so: and *Mark*, as all the Ancients aver, was but the *Amanuensis* to Saint *Peter*,  
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who dictated that Gospel. Saint *Luke* indeed comes not under this first rank of Apostles; yet is by som affirm'd to be one of the seventy Disciples: however an Apostolical person 'tis certain he was, and it was no wonder for such to be inspired. For in those first Ages of the Church men acted more by immediat inspiration of the Spirit then since. And accordingly we find *Stephen*, tho but a Deacon, had the power of miracles; and preacht as divinely as the prime Apostles, *Act. 7*. And the gift of the Holy Ghost was then a usual concomitant of conversion, as appears in the Story of *Cornelius*, *Acts 10. 45, 46*. Besides, Saint *Luke* was a constant attendant on Saint *Paul* (who derived the Faith *not from man, but by the immediat revelation of Jesus Christ*, as himself professes, *Gal. 1. 12.*) and is by som said to have wrote by dictat from him, as *Mark* did from Saint *Peter*. Then as to the Epistles they all bear the names of Apostles, except that to the Hebrews, which yet is upon very good grounds presum'd to be Saint *Pauls*. Now these were the persons commissioned by Christ to preach the Christian doctrine, and were signally assisted in the discharge of that office; so that as he tells them, it was *not they who spake, but the spirit of the Father that spake in them*, *Mat. 13. 11*. And if they spake by divine inspiration, there can be no question that they wrote so also. Nay, indeed of the  
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two, it seems more necessary they should do the later. For had they err'd in any thing they orally deliver'd, they might have retracted and cured the mischief: but these Books being design'd as a standing immutable rule of Faith and Manners to all successions, any error in them would have bin irreparable, and have entail'd it self upon posterity: which agreed neither with the truth, nor goodness of God to permit.

42. Now that these Books were indeed writ by them whose names they bear, we have as much assurance as 'tis possible to have of any thing of that nature, and that distance of time from us. For however som of them may have bin controverted; yet the greatest part have admitted no dispute, whose doctrs agreeing exactly with the others, give testimony to them. And to the bulk of those writings, it is notorious that the first Christians receiv'd them from the Apostles, and so transmitted them to the ensuing Ages, which receiv'd them with the like esteem and veneration. *They cannot be corrupted*, saies Saint *Austin* in the thirty second Book against *Fan- stus* the Manich. c. 16. *because they are and have bin in the hands of all Christians. And who- soever should first attempt an alteration, he would be confuted by the inspection of other antienter Copies. Besides, the Scriptures are not in som one Language, but translated into many: so that the*

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*faults of one Book would be corrected by others more ancient, or in a different Tongue.*

43. AND how much the body of Christians were in earnest concern'd to take care in this matter, appears by very costly evidences; multitudes of them chusing rather to part with their lives than their Bibles. And indeed 'tis a sufficient proof, that their reverence of that Book was very avowed and manifest; when their heathen Persecuters made that one part of their persecution. So that as wherever the Christian Faith was receiv'd, this Book was also, under the notion we now plead for, *viz.* as the writings of men inspir'd by God: so it was also contended for even unto death; and to part with the Bible was to renounce the Faith. And now, after such a cloud of testimonies, we may sure take up that (ill-applied) saying of the high Priest, *Mat. 26. 65.* *what farther need have we of witnesses.*

44. YET besides these, another sort of witnesses there are, I mean those intrinsic evidences which arise out of the Scripture it self; but of these I think not proper here to insist, partly because the subject will be in a great degree coincident with that of the second general consideration; and partly because these can be argumentative to none who are not qualified to discern them. Let those who doubt the divine Original of Scripture, well digest the former grounds which are within

within the verge of reason ; and when by those they are brought to read it with due reverence , they will not want Arguments from the Scripture it self to confirm their veneration of it.

45. IN the mean time , to evince how proper the former discourse is to found a rational belief that the Scripture is the word of God ; I shall compare it with those measures of credibility upon which all human transactions move , and upon which men trust their greatest concerns without diffidence or dispute.

46. THAT we must in many things trust the report of others , is so necessary , that without it human society cannot subsist. What a multitude of subjects are there in the world , who never saw their Prince , nor were at the making of any Law ? if all these should deny their obedience , because they have it only by hear-say , there is such a man , and such Laws , what would become of government ? So also for property , if nothing of testimony may be admitted , how shall any man prove his right to any thing ? All pleas must be decided by the sword , and we shall fall into that state ( which some have phancied the primitive ) of universal hostility. In like manner for traffic and commerce ; how should any Merchant first attempt a trade to any foreign part of the world , if he did not be-

lieve that such a place there was? and how could he believe that, but upon the credit of those who have bin there? Nay indeed how could any man first attempt to go but to the next Market Town, if he did not from the report of others, conclude that such a one there was, so that if this universal diffidence should prevail, every man should be a kind of *Plantagus*, fixt to the soil he first sprung up in. The absurdities are indeed so infinite, and so obvious, that I need not dilate upon them.

47. But it will perhaps be said, that in things that are told us by our contemporaries, and that relate to our own time, men will be less apt to deceive us, because they know 'tis in our power to examin and discover the truth. To this I might say, that in many instances it would scarce quit cost to do so; and the inconveniences of trial would exceed those of belief. But I shall willingly admit this probable Argument, and only desire it may be applied to our main question, by considering whether the primitive Christians who receiv'd the Scripture as divine, had not the same security of not being deceiv'd, who had as great opportunities of examining, and the greatest concern of doing it throly, since they were to engage not only their future hopes in another world, but (that which to nature is much more sensible)

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all their present enjoiments , and even life it self upon the truth of it.

48. BUT because it must be confest that we who are so many Ages remov'd from them, have not their means of assurance, let us in the next place consider, whether an assent to those testimonies they have left behind them, be not warranted by the common practice of mankind in other cases. Who is there that questions there was such a man as *William* the Conqueror in this Island? or, to lay the Scene farther, who doubts there was an *Alexander*, a *Julius Caesar*, an *Augustus*? Now what have we to found this confidence on besides the faith of History? And I presume even those who exact the severest demonstrations for Ecclesiastic Story, would think him a very impertinent Sceptic that should do the like in these. So also, as to the Authors of Books; who disputes whether *Homer* writ the *Iliads*, or *Virgil* the *Aeneids*, or *Caesar* the *Commentaries*, that pass under their names? yet none of these have bin attested in any degree like the Scripture. 'Tis said indeed, that *Caesar* ventured his own life to save his *Commentaries*, imploying one hand to hold that above the water, when it should have assisted him in swimming. But who ever laid down their lives in attestation of that, or any human composition, as multitudes of men have don for the Bible?

49. But perhaps 'twill be said, that the small concern men have, who wrote these, or other the like Books, inclines them to acquiesce in the common opinion. To this I must say, that many things inconsiderable to mankind have oft bin very laboriously difficult, as appears by many unedifying Volumes, both of Philosophers and Schole-men. But whatever may be said in this instance, 'tis manifest there are others, wherein mens real and greatest interests are intrusted to the testimonies of former Ages. For example, a man possesses an estate which was bought by his great Grand-father, or perhaps elder Progenitor: he charily preserves that deed of purchase, and never looks for farther security of his title: yet alas, at the rate that men object against the Bible, what numberless Cavils might be rais'd against such a deed? How shall it be known that there was such a man as either Seller or Purchaser? if by the witnesses, they are as liable to doubt as the other; it being as easy to forge the Attestation as the main writing: and yet notwithstanding all these possible deceits, nothing but a positive proof of forgery can invalidate this deed. Let but the Scripture have the same measure, be allowed to stand in force, to be what it pretends to be, till the contrary be (not by surmises and possible conjectures) but by evident proof evinc'd; and its greatest Advocats will ask no more.

50. A like instance may be given in public concerns: the immunities and rights of any Nation, particularly here, of our *Magna Charta*, granted many Ages since, and deposited among the public Records: to make this signify any thing, it must be taken for granted, that this was without falsification preserved to our times; yet how easy were it to suggest that in so long a succession of its keepers, som may have bin prevail'd on by the influence of Princes to abridg and curtail its concessions; others by a prevailing faction of the people to amplify and extend it? Nay, if men were as great Sceptics in Law, as they are in Divinity, they might exact demonstrations that the whole thing were not a forgery. Yet, for all these possible surmises, we still build upon it, and should think he argued very fallaciously, that should go to evacuate it, upon the force of such remote suppositions.

51. Now I desire it may be consider'd whether our security concerning the holy Scripture be not as great, nay, greater then it can be of this. For first, this is a concern only of a particular Nation, and so can expect no foreign attestation; and secondly, it has all along rested on the fidelity of its keepers; which has bin either a single person, or at best som small number at a time; whereas the Scriptures have bin witness'd to by persons of all Nations, and those not single, but collective

stive Bodies and Societies, even as many as there have bin Christian Churches throout the world. And the same that are its Attestors have bin its Guardians also, and by their multitudes made it a very difficult, if not an impossible thing to falsify it in any considerable degree; it being not imaginable, as I shew'd before from St. *Austin*, all Churches shall combine to do it: and if they did not, the fraud could not pass undetected: and if no eminent change could happen, much less could any new, any counterfeit Gospel be obtruded, after innumerable Copies of the first had bin translated into almost all Languages, and dispers'd throout the world.

52. THE Imperial Law compil'd by *Justinian*, was soon after his death, by reason of the inroads of the *Goths*, and other barbarous Nations, utterly lost in the Western world, and scarce once heard of for the space of five hundred years, and then came casually to be retriiv'd upon the taking of *Amalfis* by the *Pisans*, one single Copy being found there at the plundering of the City. And the whole credit of those Pandects, which have ever since govern'd the Western world, depends in a manner on that single Book, formerly call'd the *Pisan*; and now, after that *Pisa* was taken by the Florentines, the Florentine Copy. But notwithstanding this; the body of the Civil Law obtains; and no man thinks it reasonable



able to question its being really what it pretends to be, notwithstanding its single, and so long interrupted derivation. I might draw this parallel thro many other instances, but these may suffice to shew, that if the Scripture might find but so much equity, as to be tried by the common measures of other things, it would very well pass the test.

53. BUT men seem in this case (like our late Legislators) to set up new extraregular Courts of Justice, to try those whom no ordinary rules will cast, yet their designs require should be condemn'd: And we may conclude, 'tis not the force of reason, but of prejudice, that makes them so unequal to themselves as to reject the Scripture, when they receive every thing else upon far weaker grounds. The bottom of it is, they are resolv'd not to obey its Precepts; and therefore think it the shortest cut to disavow its authority: for should they once own that, they would find themselves intangled in the most inextricable dilemma; that of the Pharisees about *John Baptist*: *If we say from heaven, he will say, why then did you not believe him?* Mat. 21. 25. If they confess the Scriptures divine, they must be self-condemn'd in not obeying them. And truly men that have such pre engagements to their lust, that they must admit nothing that will disturb them; do but prevaricate when they call for greater evidences

and demonstrations : for those bosom Sophisters will elude the most manifest convictions ; and like Juglers, make men disbelieve even their own senses. So that any other waies of evidence will be as disputable with them, as those already offer'd : which is the third thing I propos'd to consider.

54. IT has bin sometimes seen in popular mutinies, that when blanks have bin sent them, they could not agree what to ask : and were it imaginable that God should so far court the infidelity of men, as to allow them to make their own demands, to set down what waies of proof would perswade them ; I doubt not there are many have obstinacy enough, to defeat their own methods, as well as they now do Gods. 'Tis sure there is no ordinary way of conviction left for them to ask, God having already ( as hath also bin shew'd ) afforded that. They must therefore resort to immediat revelation, expect instant assurances from heaven, that this Book we call the Bible is the word of God.

55. MY first question then is, in what manner this revelation must be made to appear credible to them. The best account we have of the several waies of revelation is from the Jews, to whom God was pleas'd upon new emergencies signally to revele himself. These were first dreams ; secondly, visions ; by both which the Prophets received

ved their inspiration. Thirdly, *Vrim* and *Tbmminim*. Fourthly, the *Bath-col* (as they term it) Thunder and voice from Heaven. Let us consider them distinctly, and see whether our Sceptical men may not probably find somewhat to dispute in every one of these. And first for dreams; it is among us so hard to distinguish between those that arise from constitution, prepossession of phancy, diabolical, or divine infusion, that those that have the most critically consider'd them, do rather difference them by their matter, then any certain discriminating circumstances: and unless we had some infallible way of discerning, our dependence on them, may more probably betray then direct us. 'Tis unquestionable that usually phancy has the greatest stroke in them. And if he that should commit himself to the guidance of his waking phancy, is not like to be over-wisely govern'd, what can we expect from his sleeping? All this and more may doubtless be soberly enough objected against the validity of our common dreams.

56. BUT admit there were now such divine dreams as brought their evidence along with them; yet sure 'tis possible for prejudic'd men, to resist even the clearest convictions. For do we not see some that have made a shift to extinguish that natural light, those notions which are interwoven into the very frame and constitution of their minds, that

so they may sin more at ease, and without reluctancy? and sure 'tis as possible for them to close their eies against all raies from without too, to resist revelation as well as instinct; and more likely, by how much a transient cause is naturally less operative then a permanent. An instance of this we have in *Balaam*, who being in these nightly visitations prohibited by God to go to *Balack*; and tho he knew then, what he afterwards saies, *Num.* 23. 19. that *God was not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent*; yet he would not take God at his first word, but upon a fresh bait to his covetousness, tries again for an answer more indulgent to his interest. Besides, if God should thus revele himself to som particular persons, yet 'tis beyond all president or imagination, that he should do it to every man; and then how shall those who have these dreams, be able to convince others that they are divine?

57. 'TIS easy to guess what reception a man that produces no other authority, would have in this ludicrous Age: he would certainly be thought rather to want sleep, then to have had revelations in it. And if *Jacob* and the Patriarchs, who were themselves acquainted with divine dreams, yet did not believe *Josephs*; any man that should now pretend in that kind, would be sure to fall under the same irony that he did, to be entertain'd with  
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*a behold this dreamer cometh*, Genes. 37. 19.

58. THE second way of revelation by vision was, where the man was wrapt into an extasy, his spirit for a while suspended from all sensible communication with the body, and entertain'd with supernatural light. In these the Prophets saw emblematical representation of future events, receiv'd knowledge of divine Mysteries, and commission and ability to discharge the whole prophetic office. Now suppose God should now raise us Prophets, and inspire them after this manner; what would the merry men of this time say to it? Can we think that they who rally upon all that the former Prophets have writ, would look with much reverence on what the new ones should say? Som perhaps would construe their raptures to be but like Mahomets Epilepsy; others a fit of frenzy, others perhaps a being *drunk with new wine*, Act. 2. 13. but those that did the most soberly consider it, would still need a new revelation to attest the truth of this: there being far more convincing arguments to prove the Scriptures divine, than any man can allege to prove his inspiration to be so. And 'tis sure a very irrational method, to attempt the clearing of a doubt, by somewhat which is it self more doubtful.

59. A third way, was by *Vrim* and *Thummim*, which Writers tell us was an Oracle resulting from the Letters which were graven in  
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in the High Priests Pectoral, to which in all important doubts the Jews of those Ages resorted, and receiv'd responses; but whether it were by the suddain prominency, or resplendency of the letters, or by any other way, is not material in this place to enquire: one thing is certain, that the Ephod, and consequently the Pectoral was in the Priests custody, and that he had the administration of the whole affair. Now I refer it to consideration, whether this one circumstance would not (to those prejudic'd men I speak of) utterly evacuate the credit of the Oracle. They have taught themselves to look on Priest-hood, whether Legal or Evangelical, only as a better name for imposture and cozenage: and they that can accuse the Priests for having kept up a cheat for so many Ages, must needs think them such omnipotent Juglers, that nothing can be fence against their Legerdemain: and by consequence, this way of revelation would rather foment their displeasure at the Ecclesiastics, then satisfy their doubts of the Scripture.

69. LASTLY, for the fourth way, that of thunder and voice from Heaven, tho' that would be a signal way of conviction to unprejudiced men, yet it would probably have as little effect as the rest upon the others: men that pretend to such deep reasoning, would think it childish to be frighted out of their  
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opinion by a clap of Thunder; som philosophical reason shall be found out, to satisfy them that 'tis the effect only of som natural cause; and any the most improbable shall serve turn to supplant the fear of its being a divine testimony to that which they are so unwilling should be true. As for the voice from Heaven, it must either be heard by others, and related to them; or else immediately by themselves: if the former, 'twill lie under the same prejudice which the Bible already do's: that they have it but by hear-say, and reporters would fall under the reproach either of design or frenzy; that they meant to deceive, or were themselves deceiv'd by their own distemper'd phancy. But if themselves should be Auditors of it; 'tis odds but their bottomless jealousies in divine Matters would suggest a possibility of fraud; tho they knew not how to trace it: nay 'tis more then possible that they will rather disbelieve their own senses; then in this instance take their testimony with all its consequences.

61. Nor is this a wild supposition: for we see it possible not only for single men, but multitudes to disbelieve their senses, thro an excess of credulity; witness the doctrine of Transubstantiation. Why may it not then be as possible for others to do the like thro a greater excess of incredulity? Besides, mens prepossessions and affections have a strange influence

influence on their Faith: men many times will not suffer themselves to believe the most credible things, if they cross their inclination. How often do we see irregular patients that will not believe any thing that their appetite craves, will do them hurt, tho their Physicians, nay, their own even sensitive experience attest it to them? And can we think that a diseas'd mind, gasping with an Hydropic thirst after the pleasures of sin, will ever assent to those premises, whose conclusion will engage to the renouncing them? Will not a luxurious voluptuous person be willing rather to give his ears the lie, to disbelieve what he hears, then permit them more deeply to disoblige his other senses, by bringing in those restraints and mortifications which the Scripture would impose upon them?

62. THUS we see how little probability there is, that any of these waies of revelation would convince these incredulous men. And indeed, those that will not believe upon such inducements as may satisfy men of sober reason, will hardly submit to any other method, according to that Assertion of Father *Abraham*; *If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be perswaded, tho one rose from the dead*, Luk. 16. 31. Now at this rate of infidelity, what way will they leave God to manifest any thing convincingly to the world? which is to put him under an impotency



tency greater then adheres to humanity : for we men have power to communicate our minds to others , tell whether to we own such or such a thing , to which we are intitled ; and we can satisfy our Auditors that it is indeed we that speak to them : but if every method God uses , do's rather increase then satisfy mens doubts , all intercourse between God and man is intercepted ; and he must do that of necessity , which *Epicurus* phancied he did of choice ; viz. keep himself unconcern'd in the affairs of mortals , as having no way of communicating with them. Nay ( what is yet , if possible , more absurd ) he must be suppos'd to have put the works of his Creation out of his own reach , to have given men discursive faculties , and left himself no way of address to them.

63. THESE inferences how horridly soever they sound , yet I see not how they can be disclaim'd by those , who are unsatisfied with all those waies by which God hath hitherto revel'd himself to the world. For can it be imagin'd , that God who created man a reasonable creature , that himself might be glorified in his free and rational obedience ; ( when all other creatures obey upon impulse and instinct ) can it , I say , be imagin'd , that he should so remissly pursue his own design , as to let so many Ages pass since the Creation , and never to acquaint mankind with the

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particulars wherein that obedience was to be exercis'd. This sure were so disagreeable to his wisdom and goodness, that it cannot be charg'd upon his will: and consequently they who own not that he has made any such revelation, must tacitly tax him of impotence, that he could not do it. But if any man will say he has, and yet reject all this which both Jews and Christians receive as such, let him produce his testimonies for the others, or rather (to retort his own measure) his demonstrations. And then let it appear whether his Scheme of doctrine, or ours, will need the greater aid of that easy credulity he reproches us with.

64. I have now gon thro the method I propos'd for evincing the Divine Original of the Scriptures, and shall not descend to examin those more minute and particular Cavils which profane men make against them; the proof of this, virtually superseding all those. For if it be reasonable to believe it the Word of God, it must be reasonable also to believe it of perfection proportionable to the Author, and then certainly it must be advanc'd beyond all our objections. For to those who except to the stile, the incoherence, the contradictions or whatever else in Scripture; I shall only ask this one question, whether it be not much more possible that they (who can pretend to be nothing above fallible

libe men) may misjudg, then that the infal-  
 lible God should dictate any thing justly lia-  
 ble to those charges: I am sure they must de-  
 part as much from Reason as Religion, to  
 affirm the contrary. But alas, instead of this  
 implicit submission to Gods Word, men take  
 up explicit prejudices against it; condemn it  
 without ever examining the truth of the Al-  
 legation. 'Tis certain, that in a writing of  
 such Antiquity, whose original Language has  
 Idioms and Phrases so peculiar, whose Coun-  
 try had customs so differing from the rest of  
 the world; 'tis impossible to judg of it with-  
 out reference to all those circumstances. Add  
 to this, that the Hébrew has bin a dead Lan-  
 guage for well nigh two thousand years, no-  
 where in common use: nor is there any other  
 ancient Book now extant in it, besides those;  
 yet not all neither, of the Old Testament.

65. Now of those many who defame Holy  
 Writ, how few are there that have the indu-  
 stry to inquire into those particulars? And  
 when for want of knowledg, som passages  
 seem improper, or perhaps contradictory;  
 the Scripture must bear the blame of their  
 ignorance, and be accus'd as absurd and un-  
 intelligible, because themselves are stupid  
 and negligent. It were therefore methinks  
 but a reasonable proposal, that no man should  
 arraign it, till they have used all honest dili-  
 gence, taken in all probable helps for the un-

derstanding it : and if this might be obtain'd , I believe most of its Accusers would like those of the woman in the Gospel , *Jo.* 8. 9. drop away , as conscious of their own incompetency : the loudest out-cries that are made against it , being commonly of those who fall upon it only as a fashionable theme of discourse , and hope to acquire themselves the reputation of wits by thus charging God foolishly . But he that would candidly and uprightly endeavor to comprehend before he judges , and to that end industriously use those means which the providence of God by the labors of pious men hath afforded him , will certainly find cause to acquit the Scripture of those imputations which our bold Critics have cast upon it . I do not say that he shall have all the obscurities of it perfectly clear'd to him ; but he shall have so many of them as is for his real advantage , and shall discern such reasons why the rest remain unfathomable , as may make him not only justify , but celebrate the wisdom of the Author .

66. YET this is to be expected only upon the fore-mention'd condition ; *viz.* that he come with sincere and honest intentions ; for as for him that comes to the Scripture with design , and wishes to find matter of cavil and accusations ; there is little doubt but that spirit of impiety and profaness which sent him thither , will meet him there as a spirit  
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of delusion and occecation. That Prince of the Air will cast such mists, raise such black vapors; that as the Apostle speaks, *the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ shall not shine unto him*, 2 Cor. 4. 5. Indeed were such a man left only to the natural efficacy of prejudice, that is of it self so blinding, so insatuating a thing, as commonly fortifies against all conviction. We see it in all the common instances of life; mens very senses are often enslav'd by it: the prepossession of a strong phancy will make the objects of sight or hearing appear quite different from what they are. But in the present case, when this shall be added to Satanical illusions, and both left to their operations by Gods with-drawing his illuminating grace, the case of such a man answers that description of the Scripture: *They have eies and see not, ears have they and hear not*, Rom. 11. 8. And that God will so withdraw his grace, we have all reason to believe; he having promis'd it only to the meek; to those who come with malleable ductile spirits; to learn, not to deride or cavil. Saint Peter tells us, that the *unlearned and unstable wrest the Scripture to their own destruction*, 2 Pet. 3. 15. And if God permit such to do so, much more will he the proud malicious.

67. I say not this, to deter any from the study of Holy Scripture, but only to caution them to bring a due preparation of mind along

long with them; Gods Word being like a generous sovereign medicament; which if simply and regularly taken, is of the greatest benefit; but if mixt with poison, serves only to make that more fatally operative. To conclude, he that would have his doubts solv'd concerning Scripture, let him follow the method our blessed Lord has describ'd: Let him *do the will of God, and then he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God*, Jo. 7. 17; Let him bring with him a probity of mind, a willingness to assent to all convictions he shall there meet with: and then he will find grounds sufficient to assure him that it is Gods Word, and consequently to be receiv'd with all the submission and reverence, that its being so exacts.

# SECT. III.

*The subject matter treated of in the Holy Scripture is excellent, as is also its end and design.*

WE have hitherto consider'd the holy Scripture only under one notion, as it is the Word of God; we come now to view it in the subject matter of it: the several parts whereof it consists; which are so various and comprehensive, as shews the whole is deriv'd from *him who is all in all*, 1 Cor. 19, 28. But that we may not speak only loosely, and at rovers, we will take this excellent frame in pieces, and consider its most eminent parts distinctly. Now the parts of Holy Writ seem to branch themselves into these severals. First, the Historical; secondly, the Prophetic; thirdly, the Doctrinal; fourthly, the Preceptive; fifthly, the Minatory; sixthly, the Promissory. These are the several veins in this rich Mine, in which he who industriously labors, will find the Psalmist was not out in his estimate, when he pronounces them *more to be desir'd than gold, yea, than much fine gold*, Psal. 19. 10.

2. To speak first of the Historical part;  
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the things which chiefly recommend a History are the dignity of the subject, the truth of the relation, and those pleasant or profitable observations which are interwoven with it. And first, for the dignity of the subject, the History of the Bible must be acknowledged to excel all others: those shew the rise and progress of some one people or Empire; this shews us the original of the whole Universe; and particularly of man, for whose use and benefit the whole Creation was design'd. By this mankind is brought into acquaintance with it self; made to know the elements of its constitution, and taught to put a differing value upon that Spirit which was *breath'd into it by God*, Gen. 2. 7. and the flesh whose *foundation is in the dust*, Job 4. 19. And when this Historical part of Scripture contracts and draws into a narrow channel, when it records the concerns but of one Nation, yet it was that which God had dignified above all the rest of the world, markt it out for his own peculiar; made it the repository of his truth, and the visible stock from whence the Messias should come, in whom *all the Nations of the earth were to be blessed*, Gen. 18. 18. so that in this one people of the Jews, was virtually infolded the highest and most important interests of the whole world; and it must be acknowledg'd, no Story could have a nobler subject to treat of.



3. SECONDLY, as to the truth of the relation, tho to those who own it Gods Word there needs no other proof; yet it wants not human Arguments to confirm it. The most undoubted symptom of sincerity in an Historian is impartiality. Now this is very eminent in Scripture writers: they do not record others faults, and baulk their own; but indifferently accuse themselves as well as others. *Moses* mentions his own diffidence and unwillingness to go on Gods message, *Ex.* 4. 13. his provocation of God at the waters of *Meribah*, *Num.* 20. *Jonah* records his own fullen behavior towards God, with as great aggravations as any of his enemies could have don. *Peter* in his dictating Saint *Marks* Gospel, neither omits nor extenuates his sin; all he seems to speak short in, is his repentance. Saint *Paul* registers himself as the greatest of sinners.

4. AND as they were not indulgent to their own personal faults, so neither did any nearness of relation, any respect of quality bribe them to a concelement: *Moses* relates the offence of his sister *Miriam* in mutining. *Num.* 12. 1. of his brother *Aaron* in the matter of the Calf, *Ex.* 32. 4. with as little disguise as that of *Korah* and his company. *David*, tho a King, hath his adultery and murder displaied in the blackest characters: and King *Hezekiahs* little vanity of showing his  
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tresures, do's not escape a remark. Nay, even the reputation of their Nation could not bias the sacred Writers ; but they freely tax their crimes : the Israelites murmurings in the wilderness , their Idolatries in *Canaan*, are set down without any palliation or excuse. And they are as frequently branded for their stubborness and ingratitude , as the Canaanites are for their abominations. So that certainly no History in the world do's better attest its truth by this evidence of impartiality.

5. IN the last place it commends it self both by the pleasure and profit it yields. The rarity of those events it records, surprizes the mind with a delightful admiration ; and that mixture of sage discourses , and well-cought Parables wherewith it abounds , do's at once please and instruct. How ingenuously apt was *Nathans* Apologue to *David* , whereby with holy artifice he ensnar'd him into repentance ? And it remains still matter of instruction to us , to shew us with what unequal scales we are apt to weigh the same crime in others and our selves. So also that long train of smart calamities which succeeded his sin , is set out with such particularity , that it seems to be exactly the crime reversest. His own lust with *Bathsbeba* , was answer'd with *Ammons* towards *Thamar* ; his murder of *Vriab* with that of *Amnon* ; his trecherous contrivance  
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of that murder, with *Abdoloms* traiterous conspiracy against him. So that every circumstance of his punishment, was the very echo and reverberation of his guilt. A multitude of the like instances might be produc'd out of holy Writ; all concurring to admonish us, that God exactly marks, and will repay our crimes; and that commonly with such propriety, that we need no other clue to guide us to the cause of our sufferings, then the very sufferings themselves. Indeed innumerable are the profitable observations arising from the historical part of Scripture, that flow so easily and unconstrain'd, that nothing but a stupid inadvertence in the reader can make him baulk them: therefore 'twould be impertinent here to multiply instances.

6. LET US next consider the prophetic part of Scripture, and we shall find it no less excellent in its kind. The prophetic Books are for the most part made up (as the prophetic Office was) of two parts; prediction and instruction. When God rais'd up Prophets, 'twas not only to acquaint men with future events; but to reform their present manners: and therefore as they are called Seers in one respect, so they are Watch-men and Shepherds in another. Nay, indeed the former was often subservient to the other as to the nobler end; their gift of fore-telling was to gain them authority, to be as it were the

seal of their commission ; to convince men that they were sent from God : and so to render them the more pliant to their reproofs and admonitions. And the very matter of their prophecies was usually adapted to this end : the denouncing of judgements being the most frequent theme, and that design'd to bring men to repentance ; as appears experimentally in the case of *Nineveh*. And in this latter part of their office, the Prophets acted with the greatest incitation and vehemence.

7. WITH what liberty and zeal do's *Elijah* arraign *Abab* of *Naboths* murder, and foretel the fatal event of it, without any fear of his power, or reverence of his greatness ? And *Samuel*, when he delivers *Saul* the fatal message of his rejection, do's passionately and convincingly expostulate with him concerning his sin, 1 *Sam.* 15. 17. Now the very same Spirit still breaths in all the prophetic Writings : the same truth of prediction, and the same zeal against vice.

8. FIRST for the predictions, what signal completions do we find ? How exactly are all the denunciations of judgments fulfill'd, where repentance has not interven'd ? He that reads the 28. chap. of *Deut.* and compares it with the Jews calamities, both under the Assyrians and Babylonians, and especially under the Romans, would think their oppressors

pressors. had consulted it, and transcrib'd their severities thence. And even these Nations, who were the instruments of accomplishing those dismal presages, had their own ruins foretold, and as punctually executed. And as in Kingdoms and Nations, so to private persons none of the prophetic threatenings ever return'd emty. The sentence pronounc'd against *Ahab*, *Jezebel*, and their posterity, was fulfill'd even to the most minute circumstances of place and manner; as is evident by comparing the denunciation of *Elijah*, 1 Kings 21. 19. 23. with their tragical ends recorded in the following chapters. And as for *Jehu*, whose service God was pleased to use in that execution, tho he rewarded it with entailing the crown of *Israel* on him for four descents; yet he fore-told those should be the limits, and accordingly we find *Zachariah*, the fourth descendent of his line, was the last of it that sat on that throne, 2 Kings 15. 10. So also the destruction of *Achitophel* and *Judas*, the one immediat, the other many hundred years remote, are fore-told by *David*, Psal. 109. and we find exactly answer'd in the event.

9. NOR was this exactness confin'd only to the severe predictions, but as eminent in the more gracious. All the blessings which God by himself, on the Ministry of his Prophets promis'd, were still infallibly made good.

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At the time of life God return'd and visited *Sarah* with conception, notwithstanding those natural improbabilities which made her not only distrust, but even deride and laugh at the promise, *Gen.* 18. The posterity of that Son of Promise, the whole race of *Abraham* was deliver'd from the Egyptian bondage, and possess'd of *Canaan*, at the precise time which God had long before signified to *Abraham*, *Gen.* 15. So likewise the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, was fore-told many years before their deportation, and *Cyrus* named for their restorer, before he had either name or being save only in Gods prescience, *Is.* 44. 28. But I need not multiply instances of national or personal promises. The earliest, and most comprehensive promise of all was that of the Messiah, in whom all persons and Nations of the world were to be blest, *Gen.* 22. 11. *that seed of the woman that should bruise the Serpents head*, *Gen.* 3. 15. To him give all the Prophets witness, as Saint Peter observes, *Acts* 10. And he who was the subject, made himself also the expounder of those prophecies in his walk to *Emmaus* with the two Disciples, *Lu.* 24. 13. *beginning at Moses, and all the Prophets, he expounded to them in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himself.*

10. THIS as it was infinitely the greatest blessing afforded mankind, so was it the most  
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frequently and eminently predicted; and that with the most exact particularity as to all the circumstances. His immaculate conception, the union of his two natures implied in his name *Immanuel*; *Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel*; is most plainly fore-told by *Is.* chap. 7. 14. Nay, the very place of his birth so punctually fore-told, that the Priests and Scribes could readily resolve *Herods* question upon the strength of the Prophecy, and assure him Christ must be *born in Bethlehem*, *Mat.* 2. 5. As for the whole business and design of his life, we find it so describ'd by *Isaiah*, chap. 61. as Christ himself owns it, *Luk.* 4. 18. *The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath appointed me to preach good tidings to the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.*

II. IF we look farther to his death, the greatest part of the Old Testament has a direct aspect on it. All the Levitical œconomy of Sacrifices and Ablutions were but prophetic Rites, and ocular Predictions of that one expiatory Oblation, Nay, most of Gods providential dispensations to the Jews, carried in them types and prefigurations of this. Their rescue from *Egypt*, the sprinkling

king of blood to secure them from the destroying Angel; the Manna with which they were fed, the Rock which supplied them water: these and many more referr'd to Christ, as their final and highest signification.

12. BUT besides these darker adumbration, we have (as the Apostle speaks) *a more sure word of prophecy*. Saint Peter in his calculation begins with *Moses*, takes *Samuel*, and the whole succession of Prophets after him, as bearing witness to this great event of Christs passion, *Acts* 4. 22. 24. And indeed he that reads the Prophets consideringly, shall find it so punctually describ'd, that the Evangelists do not much more fully instruct him in the circumstances of it. *Daniel* tells us his death, as to the kind of it, was to be violent: *The Messiah shall be cut off*; and as to the design of it, 'twas *not for himself*, *Dan.* 9. 26. But the Prophet *Isaiah* gives us more then a bare negative account of it; and expressly saies, *he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was on him, and by his stripes we were healed*, chap. 53. 5. And again, ver. 10. *Thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin*; and ver. 11. *my righteous Servant shall justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities*. Nor is, *Job* an Idumean, much short of even this Evangelical Prophet, in that short Creed of his, wherein he  
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owns him as his Redeemer, *I know that my Redeemer liveth*, Ec. Job. 19. 25,

13. AND as the end, so the circumstances of his sufferings are most of them under prediction: His extension upon the Cross is mention'd by the Psalmist: *They pierced my hands, and my feet; I may tell all my bones*, Psal. 22. 16. 17. As for his inward dolours, they are in that Psalm so pathetically described, that Christ chose that very form to breath them out in: *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* ver. 1. So his revilers did also transcribe part of their reproches from ver. 8. *He trusted in God; let him deliver him now if he will have him*, Mat. 27. 43. That vinegar which was offer'd him on the Cross, was a completion of a prophecy; *In my thirst, they gave me vinegar to drink*, Ps. 69. 21. the piercing of his side was expressly fore-told by *Zachary*; *they shall look on him whom they have pierced*, Zach. 10. 12. The company in which he suffer'd and the interment he had, are also intimated by *Isaiah*: *he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death*, Isai. 53. 9. Nay, even the disposal of his garments was not without a prophecy: *they parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots*, Ps. 22. 18. Here are a cloud of witnesses, which as they serve eminently to attest the truth of Christian Religion; so do they to evince the excellency of sacred Scri-  
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pture, as to the verity of the prophetic part.

14. As to the admonitory part of the prophetic Writings, they are in their kind no way inferior to the other. The reproofs are autoritative and convincing. What piercing exprobrations do we find of *Israels* ingratitude? How often are they upbraided with the better examples of the brute creatures? with the Ox and the As by *Isaiah*, chap. 1. 3. with the Stork and the Crane, and the Swallow, by *Jeremiah*, chap. 8. 7. Nay, the constancy of the Heathen to their false gods is instanc'd to reproch their revolt from the true. *Hath a Nation changed their gods which yet are no gods! but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit*, Jer. 2. 11. What awful, what majestic representations do we find of Gods power, to awake their dread! *Fear ye not me saith the Lord? will ye not tremble at my presence; who have placed the sand for the bounds of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass over: and tho the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; tho they roar, yet can they not pass over it?* Jer. 22. And again, *Thus saith the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy: I dwell in the high and holy place*, II. 57. 15. So we find him describ'd as *a God glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders*, Ex. 15. 11. These and many other the like heights of divine eloquence we meet

meet with in the prophetic Writings: which cannot but strike us with an awful reverence of the divine Power.

15. NOR are they less pathetic in the gentler strains. What instance is there of the greatest tenderness and love, which God has not adopted to express his by? He personates all the nearest and most endearing relations: that of a Husband; *I will marry thee to my self*, Hof. 2. 19. of a Father; *I am a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is my first born*: nay, he vies bowels with the tender sex, and makes it more possible for a mother to renounce her *compassions towards the son of her womb*, then for him to withdraw his, *Isa.* 49. 15. By all these endearments, these *cords of a man, these bands of love*, as himself styles them, *Hof.* 11. 4. endeavoring to draw his people to their duty, and their happiness. And when their perverseness frustrates all this his holy Artifice; how passionately do's he expostulate with them? how solemnly protest his averfness to their ruin? *Why will ye die O house of Israel? for I have no plesure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God, Ezek.* 18. 31, 32. with what regrets and relentings do's he think of abandoning them? *How shall I give thee up Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? my heart is turn'd within me, my repentings are kindled together;*

Hof. II. 8. In short, 'twere endless to cite the places in these prophetic Books, wherein God do's thus condescend to sollicit even the sensitive part of man; and that with such moving Rhetoric, that I cannot but wonder at the exception som of our late Critics make against the Bible, for its defect in that particular: for Oratory is nothing but a dextrous application to the affections and passions of men. And certainly we find not that don with greater advantage any where then in sacred Writ.

16. YET it was not the design of the Prophets (no more then of the Apostle) to take men with guile, 2 Cor. 12. 16. to inveigle their affections unawares to their understandings; but they address as well to their reasons, make solemn appeals to their judicative faculties. And *now judg I pray between me and my vineyard*, saies *Isa. 5. 3.* Nay, God by the Prophet *Ezekiel* solemnly pleads his own cause before them, vindicates the equity of his proceedings from the aspersions they had cast on them; and by most irrefragable Arguments refutes that injurious proverb which went currant among them; and in the close appeals to themselves, *O house of Israel are not my waies equal, are not your waies unequal?* Ezek. 18. the evidences were so clear that he remits the matter to their own determination. And generally we shall find that among  
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all the Topics of dissuasion from sin, there is none more closely prest, then that of the folly of it. Idolatry was a sin to which *Israel* had a great propension, and against which most of the Prophets admonitions were directed. And certainly it can never be more expos'd and the sottish unreasonableness of it better displaid, then we find it in the 44. chap. of *Isaiah*. In like manner we may read the Prophet *Jeremy* dissuading from the same sin by Arguments of the most irrefragable conviction, *Jer.* 10.

17. AND as the Prophets omitted nothing as to the manner of their address, to render their exhortations effectual, the matter of them was likewise so considerable as to command attention; It was commonly either the recalling them from their revolts and Apostacies from God by Idolatry, or else to convince them of the insignificancy of all those legal ceremonial performances they so much confided in, when taken up as a *superseas* to moral duties. Upon this account it is, that they often deprecate, and in a manner prohibit the solemnest of their worships. *To what purpose are the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? bring no more vain oblations: incense is an abomination to me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies I cannot away with: it is iniquity even your solemn meetings, Ec.* II. 1. II. 13. Not that these things were

were in themselves reprobable; for they were all commanded by God; but because the Jews depended so much on these external observances, that they thought by them to commute for the *weightier matters of the Law* (as our Savior after stiles them) *Judgment, Mercy and Faith*, Mat. 23. 23. lookt on these Rites which discriminated them from other Nations, as dispensations from the universal obligations of nature and common justice.

18. THIS deceit of theirs is sharply upbraided to them by the Prophet *Jeremy*; where he calls their boasts of the *temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, lying words*: and on the contrary, laies the whole stress of their obedience, and expectation of their happiness on the justice and innocence of their conversation, ch. 7. 4. And after do's smartly reproch their insolence in boldly resorting to the house, which by bringing their sins along with them, they made but an Asylum, and Sanctuary for those crimes. *Will ye steal, murder and commit adultery, and swear falsely and burn incense to Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not, and come and stand before me in this house? Is this house which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes?* chap. 7. 9, 10, 11. Indeed all the Prophets seem to conspire in this one design, of making them look thro shadows and ceremonies,

nies, to that inward purity, Justice and Honesty, which they were design'd to inculcate, not to supplant. And this design as it is in it self most excellent, most worthy the command of God, and the nature of man; so we have seen that it has bin pursued by all the most apt, and most powerful mediums, that the thing or persons addrest to were capable of; and so that the Prophets are no less eminent for the discharge of this exhortatory part of their office, then they were in the former, of the predicting.

19. THE next part of Scripture we are to consider, is the Doctrinal; by which I shall not in this place understand the whole complex of Faith and Manners together; but restrain it only to those Revelations which are the object of our Belief: and these are so sublime, as shews flesh and blood never revel'd them. Those great mysteries of our Faith, the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Hypostatical union, the Redemption of the world by making the offended party the sacrifice for the offence, are things of so high and abstruse speculation, as no finite understanding can fully fathom. I know their being so, is by som made an Argument for disbelief; but doubtless, very unjustly: for (not to insist upon the different natures of Faith and Science, by which that becomes a proper object of the one which is not of the other) our  
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non-comprehension is rather an indication that they have a higher rise; and renders it infinitely improbable that they could spring from mans invention. For 'twere to suppose too great a disproportion between human faculties, to think men could invent what themselves could not understand. Indeed these things lie so much out of the road of human imagination, that I dare appeal to the breasts of the most perverse gain-saiers, whether ever they could have fallen into their thoughts without suggestion from without. And therefore 'tis a malicious contradiction to reject these truths because of their dissonancy from human reason, and yet at the same time to ascribe their original to man. But certainly there can be nothing more inconsistent with mere natural reason, then to think God can be or do no more then man can comprehend. Never any Nation or person that own'd a Deity, did ever attempt so to circumscribe him: and it is proportionable only to the licentious profaness of these later daies, thus to measure immensity and omnipotence by our narrow scantling.

20. THE more genuine and proper effect of these supernatural truths, is, to raise our admiration of that divine Wisdom, *whose waies are so past finding out*; and to give us a just sense of that infinit distance which is between it, and the highest of that reason wherein we  
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so pride our selves. And the great propriety these doctrins have to that end, may well be reckon'd as one part of their excellency.

21. INDEED there is no part of our holy Faith, but is naturally productive of some peculiar vertue; as the whole Scheme together engages us to be universally *holy in all manner of conversation*, 1 Pet. 1. 15. And it is the supereminent advantage true Religion hath over all false ones, that it tends to so laudable an end.

22. THE Theology of the Heathens was in many instances an extract and quintessence of vice. Their most solemn Rites, and sacredest Mysteries were of such a nature, that instead of refining and elevating, they corrupted and debased their Votaries; immerst them in all those abominable pollutions which sober nature abhorr'd. Whereas the principles of our Faith serve to spiritualize and rectify us, to raise us as much above mere manhood as theirs cast them below it.

23. AND as they are of this vast advantage to us, so also are they just to God, in giving us right notions of him. What vile unworthy apprehensions had the Heathen of their Deities; intitling them not only to the passions but even to the crimes of men; making *Jupiter* an adulterer, *Mercury* a thief, *Bacchus* a drunkard, &c. proportionably of the rest? Whereas our God is represented to us as an

essence, so spiritual, and incorporeal, that we must be unbodied our selves before we can perfectly conceive what he is: so far from the impotent affections and inclinations of men, that he has neither parts, nor passions; and is fain to veil himself under that disguise, to speak somtimes as if he had, merely in condescension to our grosser faculties. And again, so far from being an example, a patron of vice, this his *eyes are too pure to behold iniquity*, Hab. i. 13. Holiness is an essential part of his nature, and he must deny himself to put it off.

24. THE greatest descent that ever he made to humanity, was in the incarnation of the second person: yet even in that, tho he was linked with a sinful nature, yet he preserved the person immaculate; and while he had all the sins of the world upon him by imputation, suffer'd not any one to be inherent in him.

25. TO conclude, the Scripture describes our God to us by all those glorious Attributes of infinity, Power and Justice, which may render him the proper object of our Adorations and Reverence: and it describes him also in those gentler Attributes of Goodness, Mercy and Truth, which may excite our love of, and dependence on him. These are representations something worthy of God, and such as impress upon our mind great thoughts of him.

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26. BUT never did the divine Attributes so concur to exert themselves, as in the mystery of our Redemption: where his Justice was satisfied without diminution to his Mercy; and his Mercy without entrenching on his Justice: his Holiness most eminent in his indignation against sin, and yet his Love no less so in sparing sinners: these contradictions being reconcil'd, this discord compos'd into harmony by his infinit Wisdom. This is that stupendous Mystery into which *the Angels desir'd to look*, 1 Pet 1. 12. And this is it which by *the Gospel is preach'd unto us*; as it follows, ver. 25.

27. AND as the Scripture gives us this knowledg of God, so it do's also of our selves; in which two, all profitable knowledg is compris'd. It teaches us how vile we were in our original dust; and how much viler yet in our fall; which would have sunk us below our first principles, sent us not only to earth; but hell. It shews the impotence of our lapsed estate: that we are not *able of our selves so much as to thinke a good thought*; and it shews us also the dignity of our renovat'd estate; that we are *heirs of God, and fellow-heirs with Christ*, Ro. 8. 17. yet lest this might puff us up with mistaken hopes; it plainly acquaints us with the condition on which this depends; that it must be our obedience both active and passive, which is to intitle us to it: that we

must be faithful to death, if we mean to inherit a crown of life, Rev. 2. 10. and that we must suffer with Christ, if we will be glorified with him, Ro. 8. 17. And upon supposition that we perform our parts of the condition, it gives us the most certain assurance, engages Gods veracity that he will not fail on his. By this it gives us support against all the adversities of life; assuring us *the sufferings of it are not worthy to be compared with the glory we expect*, Rom. 8. 18. yea, and against the terrors of death too; by assuring us that what we look on as a dissolution, is but a temporary parting; and we only put off our bodies, that they may put off corruption, and be clothed with immortality.

28. THESE and the like are the doctrines the holy Scripture offers to us: and we may certainly say, they are *faithful sayings*, and *worthy of all acceptation*, 1 Tim. 4. 15. The notions it gives us of God are so sublime and great, that they cannot but affect us with reverence, and admiration: and yet withall, so amiable and endearing that they cannot but raise love and gratitude, affiance and delight.

29. AND, which is yet more, these milder Attributes are apt to inspirit us with a generous ambition of assimilation; excite us to transcribe all his imitable excellencies: in which the very Heathens could discern consisted

sisted the accomplishment of human felicity.

30. AND then the knowledg it gives us of our selves, do's us the kindest office imaginable: keeps us from those swelling thoughts we are too apt to entertain, and shews us the necessity of bottoming our hopes upon a firmer foundation: and then again keeps us from being lazy or secure, by shewing us the necessity of our own endeyors. In a word, it teaches us to be humble and industrious, and whoever is so ballasted can hardly be shipwrackt.

31. THESE are the excellencies of the doctrinal part of Scripture, which also renders them most aptly preparative for the preceptive. And indeed, so they were design'd: the *Credenda* and the *Agenda* being such inseparable relations, that whoever parts them, forfeits the advantage of both. The most solemn profession of Christ, the most importunate invocations, Lord, Lord, will signify nothing to them *which do not the things which he saies*, Mat. 7. And how excellent, how rational those precepts are which the Scripture proposes to us from him, is our next point of consideration.

32. THE first Law which God gave to mankind was that of nature. And tho the impressions of it upon the mind be by *Adams* fall exceedingly dimm'd and defac'd; yet that

that derogates nothing from the dignity and worth of that Law, which God has bin so far from cancelling, that he seems to have made it the rule and square of his subsequent Laws: so that nothing is injoin'd in those, but what is consonant and agreeable to that. The Moral Law given in the Decalogue to the Jews, the Evangelical Law given in the Gospel tho Christians, have this natural Law for their basis and foundation. They licence nothing which that prohibits, and very rarely prohibit any thing which it licences.

32. T<sup>his</sup> true, Christ in his Sermon on the Mount, raises Christians to a greater strictness then the Jews thought themselves oblig'd to; but that was not by contradicting either the natural, or moral Law, but by rescuing the latter from those corruptions which the false glosses of the Scribes and Pharisees had mixt with it; and reducing it to its primitive integrity, and extent. In a word, as the Decalogue was given to repair the defacings, and renew the impressions of the natural Law; so the precepts of the Gospel were design'd to revive and illustrate both. And accordingly we find Christ, in the matter of divorce, calls them back to this natural Law; *In the beginning it was not so*, Mat. 19. 8. Ifay not but that even these natural notions, are in som instances refin'd and elevated by Christ; the second *Adam* being to repair the fall of the first with

with advantage: but yet he still builds upon that ground-work, introduces nothing that is inconsistent with it.

34. AND this accordance between these several Laws is a circumstance that highly recommends Scripture precepts to us. We cannot imagin but that God who made man for no other end but to be an instrument of his glory, and a recipient of all communicable parts of his happiness, would assign him such rules and measures as were most conducive to those ends. And therefore since the Scripture injunctions are of the same mould, we must conclude them to be such as tend to the perfection of our being; the making us what God originally intend us; and he that would not be that, will certainly chuse much worse for himself.

35. I know there have bin prejudices taken up against the precepts of Christ, as if they impos'd unreasonable, unsupportable strictnesses upon men: and som have assum'd liberty to argue mutinously against them; nay, against God too for putting such natural appetites into men, and then forbidding them to satisfy them.

36. BUT the ground of this cavil is the not rightly distinguishing of natural appetites, which are to be differenc'd according to the two states of rectitude and depravation: those of the first rank are the appetites  
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God put into man; and those were all regular and innocent, such as tended to the preservation of his being: nature in its first integrity measuring its desires by its needs. Now Christs prohibitions are not directed against these, he forbids no one kind of these desires. And tho the precept of self-denial may sometimes restrain us in som particular acts; yet that is but proportionable to that restraint *Adam* was under in relation to the forbidden tree, a particular instance of his obedience, and fence of his safety. So that if men would consider nature under this its first and best notion, they cannot accuse Christ of being severe to it.

37. But 'tis manifest they take it in another acception, and mean that corruption of nature which inordinatly inclines to sensitive things; and on this account they call their riots, their luxuries, appetites put into them by God: whereas 'tis manifest this was superinduced from another coast: The wise man gives us its true pedigree in what he saies of death, which is its twin-sister: *By the envy of the devil came death into the world*, Wis. 2. 24. And can they expect that Christ who came to *destroy the works of the devil*, 1 Joh. 3. 8. should frame Laws in their favor, make Acts of toleration and indulgence for them? This were to annul the whole design of his coming into the world, which was to restore us from our

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lapst estate, and elevate us to those higher degrees of purity which he came not only to prescribe, but to exemplify to us.

38. BUT in this affair men often take nature in a yet wider and worse notion; and under natural desires comprehend whatever upon any sort of motive they have a mind to do. The awe of a superior, the importunity of a companion, custom, and example, make men do many ill things, to which their nature would never prompt them; nay, many times such as their nature reluc̄ts to, and abhors. 'Tis certainly thus in all debauchery and excess. 'Tis evident, it gratifies no mans nature to be drunk, or to lie under undigested loads of meats: these are out-rages and violences upon nature, take it only in the most sensitive notion, such as she struggles to avert: and yet men make her bear, not only the oppression, but the blame too.

39. BUT besides 'tis to be consider'd, that the nature of a man includes reason as well as sense, and to this all sorts of luxury are yet more repugnant, as that which clouds the mind, and degrades the man (who in his constitution is a rational being) and sets him in the rank of mere animals: and certainly these can be no appetites of nature, which thus subvert it.

40. THE like may be said concerning revenge; particularly that absurdest sort of it,

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duels; which certainly are as great contradictions to nature as can be imagin'd, the unravelling and cancelling its very first principle of self-preservation; (which in other instances men bring in bar against duty.) And yet men will say the generosity of their natures compels them to it; so making their natures a kind of *felo de se* to prompt the destroying it self: when alas 'tis only the false notion they have got of honor that so engages them. And if men would but soberly consider, they must be convinc'd that there is nothing more agreeable to reason than that precept of Christ of not retaliating injuries; which is in effect but to bid us to chuse a single inconvenience before a long train of mischiefs. And certainly if nature even in its deprav'd estate were left to determine, it would resolve it a better bargain to go off with a reprochful word, then to lose a limb, perhaps a life in the revenge of it. There being no maxim more indisputable, than that of evils the least is to be chosen. And the innate principle of self-love do's more strongly bias nature to preserve it self, then any external thing can to destroy it.

41. I know 'twill be said to this, that revenge is a natural appetite: but I say still, self-preservation is more so; and would prevail against as much of revenge as is natural, were it not heightened and fortified by phancy, and that

that Chimera of point of honor, which, as it is now stated, is certainly one of the most empty nothings that ever was brought in balance with solid interests. And indeed 'tis to belie nature, and suppose it to have forfeited all degrees of reason, as well as vertue, to fasten so absurd a choice upon her. But admit revenge to be never so much the dictate of corrupt nature; 'tis certain 'tis not of primitive regular nature. Revenge is but a relative to injury: and he that will say God put the appetite of revenge into man, must say he put the appetite of injury into him also: which is such an account of the sixth daies creation, as is hardly consistent with Gods own testimony of its being *very good*, Gen. 1.

42. BESIDES, 'tis certain all the desires God infus'd into human nature, were such as tended to its preservation; but this of revenge, is of all other the most destructive, as is too sadly attested by the daily tragical effects of it. In short, the wise man gives a good summary of the whole matter: *God made man upright, but he sought out many inventions*, Eccl. 7. 29.

43. Now if man have by his own voluntary act deprav'd himself, it would be neither just nor kind in God to warp his Laws to mans now distorted frame; but it is both, to keep up the perfect rectitude of those, and call upon man to reduce himself to a confor-

mity with them: and when to this is added such a supply of grace as may silence the plea of disability, there can nothing be imagin'd more worthy of God, or more indulgent to man.

44. AND all this Christ do's in the Gospel, in those precepts which the blind world makes the subject of their cavil or scorn. It were an easy task to evince this in every particular precept of the Gospel; but I shall content my self with the instances already given, and not swell this Tract by insisting upon what has already bin the subject of so many pious and excellent discourses, as must already have convinc'd all but the obstinate.

45. WE proceed therefore to a view of the promissory parts of Scripture; in which we are first in general to observe the great goodness of God, in making any promises at all to us; and next to examin of what nature and excellence these promises are. And first if we consider how many titles God has to our obedience, we must acknowledg he may challenge it as his undoubted right: We are the work of his hands; and if the Potter have power over the clay ( the materials whereof are not of his making ) much more has God over his creatures, whose matter as well as form is wholly owing to him. We are the price of his blood, And if men account purchase an indefeisible title, God must

must have absolute dominion over what he has bought, and at so dear a price too as his own blood: Lastly we depend upon him for the support of that being he has given us: we live merely upon his bounty, spend upon his stock. And what Patron will not expect observance from one who thus subsists by him?

46. YET as if God had none of these claims, these preingagements upon us, he descends to treat with us as free-men, by way of Article and compact; buies his own of us, and engages to reward that obedience, which he might upon the utmost penalties exact: which is such an astonishing indulgence as our highest gratitude cannot reach: and of this the sacred Scriptures are the evidences and records; and therefore upon that account deserve at once our reverence, and our joy.

47. BUT this will yet farther appear, if we look in the second place into the promises themselves; which are so extensive as to take in both our present and future state: according to that of the Apostle; *Godliness hath the promise of this life, and of that which is to come,* 1 Tim. 4. 8. For the present, they are proportion'd to the several parts of our composition; the body, and the mind, the outward and the inward man; so stretching themselves to all we can really be concern'd for in this world.

48. AND first for the body, the Old Testament

stament abounds in promises of this sort. The first part of the 28. of Deut. contains a full catalogue of all temporal blessings; and those irreversibly entail'd upon the Israelites obedience, ver. 1. The Psalmist tells us, *they that fear the Lord shall lack nothing*, Ps. 34. 9. *that they shall not be confounded in the perillous time; and in the daies of dearth they shall have enough*, Ps. 37. 19. And Solomon, *that the Lord will not suffer the righteous to famish*, Pro. 10. 3. And tho under the Gospel, the promises of temporal affluence seem not so large; (its design being to spiritualize us, and raise our minds to higher injoiments; ) yet it gives us ample security of so much as is really good for us. It supersedes our care for our selves by assuring us *all these things shall be added to us*, Mat. 6. 33. that is, *all those things which our heavenly Father knows we have need of*, ver. 32. which is all the limitations the context gives. And certainly we have little temptation to fear want, who have him for our provider; *whose are all the beasts of the Forrest, and the cattel upon a thousand hills*, Ps. 50. 10.

49. AND when we are thus secur'd of all things necessary, it may perhaps be an equal mercy to secure us from great abundance; which at the best, is but a *lading ones self with thick clay*, in the Prophets phrase, *Hab. 2. 6.* but is often a snare as well as a burden.

50. BESIDES, the Gospel by its precepts  
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of temperance and self-denial, do's so contract our appetites, that a competence is a more adequate promise to them, then that of superfluity would have bin: and 'tis also the mesure wherein all the true satisfaction of the senses consist; which are gratifi'd with moderate pleasures, but suffocated and overwhelm'd with excessive. The temperate man tastes and relishes his portion, whilst the voluptuous may rather be said to wallow in his plenty then enjoy it.

51. AND as the necessities of life, so life it self, and the continuance of that, is a Scripture promise. The fifth Commandment affixes it to one particular duty: but it is in a multitude of places in the Old Testament annex'd to general obedience. Thus it is, *Deut. 11. 9.* and again, *ver. 21.* And *Solomon* proposes this practical wisdom as the multiplier of daies: *By me they daies shall be multiplied, and the years of thy life shall be increased.* *Pro. 9. 11.* and chap. 3. *Length of daies is in her right hand,* *ver. 16.* And tho we find not this promise repeted in the New Testament, yet neither is it retracted: 'tis true, the Gospel bids us be ready to lay down our lives for Christs sake, but it tells us withal, that he that will lose his life, shall save it: which tho it be universally true only in the spiritual sense, yet it often proves so in a literal. It did so eminently in the destruction of *Jerusalem,*

lem, where the most resolute Christians escap'd, while the base compliers perish'd together with those they sought to endear. This is certain, that if the New Testament do not expressly promise long life, yet it do's by its rules of temperance and sobriety, contentedness and chearfulness, very much promote it: and so do's virtually and efficaciously ratify those the Old Testament made.

52. THE next outward blessing is reputation: and this also is a Scripture promise. *The wise shall inherit glory*, Prov. 3. 38. And the vertuous woman *Solomon* describes, is not only blessed by her children and husband, but *she is praised in the gate*, Pro. 31. ult. Nay, this blessing is extended even beyond life. *The memory of the just shall be blessed*, Pro. 10. 7. Nor do's the Gospel evacuate this promise; but rather prompts us to the waies of having it made good to us, by advising us to *abstain from all appearance of evil*, 1 Thes. 5. 22. *to provide for honest things, not only in the sight of God, but also in the sight of men*, 2 Cor. 8. 21.

53. 'TIS true indeed, Christ fore-warns his Disciples that they shall be revil'd, and have all manner of evil spoken against them *falsly*, for his names sake: but then the cause transform'd the sufferings, and made it so honorable, that they were to count it matter of joy. Mat. 5. 11, 12. Neither was this any paradox



radox even in relation to their reputation; which tho' sullied by a few ill men of that age, yet has bin most illustrious among all Ages since. Their sufferings and indignities gave them a new title of honor, and added the Martyr to the Apostle. And the event has bin proportionable in all successions since: Those holy men that fill'd up the Pagan prisons, fill'd up the Churches Diptycs also, and have bin had as the Psalmist speaks, *in everlasting remembrance*, Ps. 112. 6.

54. AND as Scripture-promises thus take in all the concerns of the outward man, so do they also of the inward. The fundamental promise of this kind, is that of *sending Christ into the world*, and *in him establishing the new Covenant*; which we find, Jer. 31. 31. and is referr'd to by the Author to the Hebrews, *I will put my Laws in their hearts, and write them in their minds; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more*, Heb. 10. 16.

55. AND this is so comprehensive a promise as includes all the concerns of the inward man. The evils incident to the mind of man may be reduc'd to two; impurity, and inquietude: and here is a cure to both. The divine Law written in the heart, drives thence all those swarms of noysom lust, which like the Egyptian Frogs over-run and putrify the soul. Where that is seated and enshrind, those can no more stand before it, the *Da-*

gon before the Ark. This repairs the divine Image in us (in which consists the perfection of our nature) *renews us in the spirits of our minds*, Eph. 4. 22. *and purges our consciences from dead works*, Heb. 6. 4. which all the Cathartics and Lustrations among the Heathen, all the sacrifices and ceremonies of the Law were not able to do.

56. SECONDLY, this promise secures the mind from that restlessness and inquietness, which attends both the dominion and guilt of sin. To be subject to a mans lusts and corrupt appetites is of all others the vilest vassalage: they are the cruellest task-masters, and allow their slaves no rest, no intermission of their drudgery, And then again, the guilt that tortures and racks the mind with dreadful expectations, keeps it in perpetual agitation and tumult; which is excellently describ'd by the Prophet *Isaiah*, *The wicked is like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest; whose waters cast out mire and dirt: there is no peace saith my God to the wicked*, Is. 48. 12. Now prosperous soever vice may seem to be in the world, yet there are such secret pangs and horrors that dog it, that as *Solomon* saies, *even in laughter the heart is sorrowful*, Prov. 14. 13.

57. BUT this Evangelical promise of being *merciful to our iniquities, and remembering our sins no more*, calms this tempest, introduces peace and serenity into the mind,  
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and reconciles us at once to God and our selves. And sure we may well say with the Apostle, these are *great and precious promises*, 2. Pet. 1. 4.

58. THERE are besides many other which spring from these principal, as suckers from the root: such are the promises of fresh supplies of grace upon a good imploiment of the former. *To him that hath shall be given*, Mat. 25. 29. Nay, even of the source and fountain of all grace. *He shall give the holy spirit to them that ask him*, Mat. 7. 11. Such is that of supporting us in all difficulties and assaults: *the not suffering us to be tempted above that we are able*, 1 Cor. 10. 13. which like Gods bow set in the clouds, Gen. 9. is our security, that we shall not be over-whelm'd by any deluge of temptation: and (to instance no more) such is that comprehensive promise of hearing our prayers, *Ask and it shall be given you*, Mat. 7. 7. This puts all good things within our reach, gives us the key of Gods Store-house, from whence we may furnish our selves with all that is really good for us. And if a few full Barns could tempt the rich man in the Gospel, to pronounce a Requiem to his soul; what notes of acquiescence may they sing, who have the command of an inexhaustible store; that are suppli'd by him whose is the earth, and the fulness thereof?

59. AND certainly, all these promises to-

gether must be ( to use the Apostles phrase ) *strong consolation*; such as may quiet and calm all the fears and griefs, all the tumults and perturbations of the mind, in relation to its present state. But then there are others relating to the future of a much higher elevation: those glories and felicities of another world, which are so far beyond our narrow conception, that the comprehension and injoiment must begin together. The Scripture shadows it out to us by all the notions we have of happiness: by *glory*, Rom. 8. 18. by a *kingdom*, Mat. 25. 14. by *joy*, Mat. 25. 21. and which comprehends all, by *being with the Lord*, 1 Thes. 4. 17. *seeing him face to face*, 1 Cor. 13. 12. *being like to him*, 1 Jo. 3. 2. In a word 'tis *bliss* in the utmost extent: immense for quantity, and eternal for duration.

60. AND surely this promise is so excellent for kind, so liberal in its degree, so transcendently great in all respects, that did it stand single, stript of all those that relate to this life, it alone would justify the name of Gospel, and be the best tidings that ever came to mankind. For alas, if we compare the hopes that other Religions propose to their Votaries with these, how base, how ignoble are they! The Heathens Elysium, the Mahumetan Paradise, were but higher gratifications of the sensual part, and consequently were depressions and debasements of the rational. So that in effect  
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they provided a heaven for the beast, and a hell for the man. We may therefore confidently resume our conclusion, and pronounce the Scripture promises to be so divine and excellent, that they could as little have bin made, as they can be perform'd by any but an holy and almighty Author.

61. NOR is their being conditional any impeachment to their worth, but an enhancement. Should God have made them (as som phancy he has his decrees) absolute and irrelative; he had set his promises at war with his precepts, and these should have superseeded what those injoin. We are all very nigardly towards God, and should have bin apt to have ask'd *Judas's* question; *to what purpose is this wast?* Mat. 26. 8. What needs the labor of the course if the prize be certain? And it must have bin infinitely below the wisdom and majesty of the supreme Legislator, to make Laws, and then evacuate them by dispensing rewards without any aspect on their observance. 'Tis the Sanction which inspires the Law, without which the divine, as well as the human, would to most men be a *dead letter*.

62. BUT against this God has abundantly provided, not only by the conditionality of the promises, but the terror of his threats too; which is the last part of Scripture which falls under consideration. And these are of  
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the most direful kinds; and cannot better be illustrated then by the opposition they stand in to the promises: for as those included all things that might make men happy either as to this life or the next; so these do all that may make them miserable. If we make our reflection on all the particulars of the promises; we shall find the threats answering them as their reverse or dark shadow.

63. AND first as concerning the outward state, if we look but into the 28 of *Deut.* we shall find, that after all the gracious promises which begun the chapter, it finally ends in thunder, in the most dreadful denunciations imaginable, and those adapted by a most peculiar opposition to the former promises: as the Reader may see at large in that Chapter. And the whole tenor of the Scripture goes in the like stile. Thus, *Psal. 140. 11. A wicked person shall not prosper in the earth; evill shall hunt the wicked man to overthrow him. The Lord will not suffer the righteous to famish, but he casteth out the substance of the wicked;* *Pro. 10. 3. And again, the righteous eateth to the satisfying of his soul; but the belly of the wicked shall want,* *Pro. 13. 25. Multitudes of like general threatnings of temporal improsperity there are every where scatter'd throout the Scripture; and many more appli'd to particular vices, as sloth, unmercifulness, luxury,*

luxury, and the like; which would be here too long to enumerate.

64. AND altho these threatnings may seem somtimes to be literally confuted by the wealth and opulency of wicked men, yet they never miss of being really and virtually verified. For either their prosperities are very short, and only preparative to a more eminent ruin, which was the Psalmists resolution of this doubt, *Psal. 72.* or else if God leave them the matter of temporal happiness, yet he subtracts the virtue and spirit of them, renders them empty and unsatisfying. This is well exprest by the Psalmist in the case of the Israelites: *He gave them their desire; and sent leaness withall into their soul,* Psa. 106. 15. and by Zophar, *Job. 20. 22.* where speaking of the wicked, he saith; *In the fulness of his sufficiency shall he be in straits.* And to this Solomon seems to refer, when he saith; *the blessing of the Lord maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it;* Pro. 10. 22.

65. NEITHER is it only the comforts of life; but life it self that is threatned to be taken from wicked men: untimely death is throout the Old Testament frequently mention'd as the guerdon of impiety: tis often assign'd judicially in particual cases: *Thou shalt be cut off from his people,* being the usual sentence upon most offenders under the Levitical Law. But tis also menaced more generally

rally as an immediat judgment from God: *The blood-thirsty and deceitful men shall not live out half their daies*, Psal. 55. 23. Farther yet, their names shall putrify as soon as their Carcasses: *the name of the wicked shall rot*; Pro. 10. 7. Nay both their infamy and their ruin are intail'd upon their posterity. *The seed of evil doers shall never be renown'd. Prepare slaughter for his children, for the iniquity of their fathers*; Isa. 14. 20. 21.

66. IF now we look on Scripture threatenings in relation to the mind of man, we shall find them yet more severe: wilful impenitent sinners being cut off from the benefits of the new covenant, nor barely so, but look'd upon as despisers of it, and that blood of Christ in which it was seal'd; Heb. 10. 29. nay as those murderous Wretches that shed it: *They crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh*; Heb. 6. 6. And this is the farallest sentence that can fall on any man in this life; to be thus disfranchis'd of all the privileges of the Gospel, and ranckt as well in punishment as guilt, with the most criminous of mankind.

67. FROM hence 'tis consequent, that the mind remains not only in its native impurity, but in a greater and more incurable one; whilst that blood which alone could cleanse it, serves but to embue and pollute it, and as it were flush, and excite it to all imma-



immanities and vilenesses: and *he that is thus filthy*, 'tis the doom pronounc'd against him, that he *shall be filthy still*, Rev. 22. 11.

68. AND then in the second place, what calm can there be to such a mind? what remains to such a person, but that *fearful expectation of wrath and fiery indignation*, which the Apostle mentions, Heb. 10. 27. Indeed, were there none but temporal mischiefs to fear, yet it were very unpleasant to think ones self, like *Cain*, out-law'd from the presence and protection of God; to be afraid *that every man that meets us should slay us*, Gen. 4. 14. Nay, those confus'd indistinct fears of indefinite evils which attend guilt, are very unquiet uneasy inmates in the mind. This is excellently describ'd by *Moses*; *The Lord shall give thee a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind, and thy life, shall hang in doubt before thee, and thou shalt fear day and night; in the morning thou shalt say, would God it were evening, and in the evening, would God it were morning*, Deut, 28. 65, 66, 67.

69. AND what can be more wretched then to have a mind thus agitated and tost, rackt and tortur'd; especially when thro all these clouds it sees a glimpse of the eternal To-phet; and knows, that from the billows of this uneasy state, it must be tost into that Lake of fire. And this, is indeed *the dregs of*

*the cup of Gods wrath*, the dreadfullest and most astonishing of all Scripture denunciations. This comprehends all that the nature of man is capable of suffering. Divines distinguish it into the pain of sense, and of loss: that of sense is represented to us in Scripture by fire; and that accended, and render'd noisom as well as painful by brimstone, that afflicts the smell as well as the touch: sometimes by *outer darkness*, *wailing and gnashing of teeth*, to grate the ears, and consume the eies; by intolerable thirst, to torment the palate. Not that we are to think the sensitive pains of Hell do not infinitely exceed all these; but because these are the highest measures our present capacities can make, and are adequate to those senses for whose carnal satisfactions we incur them.

70. THE pain of loss is yet more dismal; as being seated in the soul, whose spiritual nature will then serve it only to render its torments more refin'd, and acute. With what anguish will it then see it self banish'd from the presence of God, and consequently from all that may give satisfaction and bliss to the creature? But yet with how much deeper anguish will it reflect on it self as the Author of that deprivation? How will it recollect the many despis'd tenders of grace, the easy terms on which salvation might have bin had? And how sadly will conscience then revenge

venge all its stifled admonitions by an unsilenceable clamor, *that worm which never dies*, Mar. 9. 48. How wounding will it then be to see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and all the Saints in the kingdom of God, Luk. 13. 28. (nay, that poor *Lazarus*, whom here men turn'd over to the charity of their dogs) and it self in the company of the devil and his angels, who will then upbraid what they once inticed to?

71. NATURE abhors nothing more than to have our misery insulted over by those who drew us into it: yet that no circumstance may be lacking to their torment, this must be the perpetual entertainment of damn'd souls. And to all this Eternity is the dismal adjunct; which is of all other circumstances the most disconsolate, as leaving not so much as a glimpse of hopes; which here uses still to be the reserve; and last resort of the miserable.

72. THIS Eternity is that which gives an edg, infuses a new acrimony into the torments: and is the highest strain, the vertical point of misery. These are those *terrors of the Lord*, with which the Scripture acquaints us; and sure we cannot say that these are flat contemptible menaces; but such as suit the dreadful Majesty of that *God who is a consuming fire*, Heb. 12. 29. So that these are as aptly accommodated for the exciting our dread, as the promises were of our love:

both jointly concur to awake our industry.

73. For God has bin so good to mankind, as to make the threats conditional as well as the promises: so that we as well know the way to avoid the one, as we do to attain the other. Nor has he any other intendment or end in proposing them, but that we may do so. See to this purpose, with what solemnity he protests it by *Moses*; *I call heaven and earth to record against you this day that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live.* Deut. 30. 19.

74. I have now run thro the several parts of Scripture I proposed to speak of. And tho I have in each given rather short instances and essays then an exact description, yet even in these contracted lineaments the exquisite proportions may be discern'd. And if the Reader shall hence be encourag'd to extend his contemplations, and as he reads holy Scripture, observe it in all its graces, and full dimensions; I doubt not he will pronounce from his experience, that the matter of the divine Book is very correspondent to the Author: which is the highest Eulogy imaginable.

75. IN the next place we are to consider the holy Scripture in relation to its end and design; in proportion to which every thing is more or less valuable. The most exquisite frame

frame, and curious contrivance, that has no determinat end or use, is but a piece of industrious folly, a *Spiders web*; as the Prophet speaks, *Isa.* 59. 5. Now those designs have alwaies been esteem'd the most excellent that have had the most worthy subjects, and bin of the greatest extent. Accordingly, those who have projected the obliging and benefiting of other men (tho but within a priyat Sphere) have alwaies bin lookt on as men of generous and noble designs. Those who have taken their level higher, and directed their aim to a more public good, tho but of a City or Nation, have proportionably acquir'd a greater esteem. But those who have aspir'd to be universal benefactors, to do something for the common benefit of the world; their fame has commonly reach'd as far as their influences; men have reverenc'd, nay somtimes (according to the common excesses of mans nature) ador'd them. Many of the heathen deities (especially their demi-gods) having bin only those persons, who by introducing som useful Art, or other part of knowledg, had oblig'd mankind. So we see what a natural gratitude men are apt to pay to worthy and generous designs. And if we will be content but to stand to this common award of our nature, the Scripture will have the fairest claim imaginable to our reverence and thankfulness, upon this very account  
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of the excellency of its designs.

76. **NOR** need we borrow the balance of the Sanctuary to weigh them in; we may do it in our own scales; for they exactly answer the two properties above mention'd, of profit and diffusiveness which in secular concerns are the standard rules of good designs. For first, it is the sole scope and aim of Scripture, the very end for which 'twas writ, to benefit and advantage men; and that secondly, not only som small select number, som little angle or corner of the world, but the whole race of mankind, the entire Universe; and he that can imagin a more diffusive design, must imagin more worlds also.

77. **NOW** for the first of these, that it is the design of the Scripture to benefit men, we need appeal but to Scripture it self; which surely can give the best account to what ends 'tis directed; and that tells us, *it is to make us wise unto salvation*, 2 Tim. 3. 15. In which is comprehended the greatest benefit that mans nature is capable of: the making us wise while we live here, and the saving us eternally. And this sure is the most generous, the most obliging design, that 'tis possible even for the Creator to have upon the creature: and this is it which the holy Scripture negotiates with us.

78. **AND** first, the making us wise, is so inviting a proposal to humanity, that we see when

when that was much wiser then now it is, it caught at a fallacious tender of it; the very sound of it, tho out of the devils mouth, fascinated our first Parents, and hurried them to the highest disobedience, and certainest ruin. And therefore now God by the holy Scriptures makes us an offer as much more safe, as it is more sincere; when he sends his Word thus to be *a lamp to our feet, and a light to our paths*, Pf. 119. 105. to teach us all that is good for us to know, our affectation of ignorance will be more culpable then theirs of knowledg, if we do not admire the kindness, & embrace the bounty of such a tender.

79. Now the making us wise must be understood according to the Scripture notion of wisdom, which is *not the wisdom of this world, nor of the Princes of this world, which come to nought*, as the Apostle speaks, 1 Cor. 2. 5. *but that wisdom which descends from above*, Ja. 3. 17. which he there describes to be *first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy*. Indeed the Scripture usually comprehends these and all other graces under Wisdom; for it makes it synonymous to that which includes them all, viz. the fear of the Lord. Thus we find throout the whole Book of Proverbs these us'd as terms convertible. In short, Wisdom is that practical knowledg of God and our selves  
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which engages us to obedience and duty; and this is agreeable to that definition the Wise man gives of it; *The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way*, Pro. 14. 8. Without this, all the most refin'd and aerial speculations, are but like *Thales's* star-gazing; which secur'd him not from falling in the water; nay, betray'd him to it. In this is all solid wisdom compris'd.

80. THE utmost all the wise men in the world have pretended to, is but to know what true happiness is, and what is the means of attaining it; and what they sought with so much study, and so little success, the Scripture presents us with in the greatest certainty, and plainest characters, such as *he that runs may read*, Hab. 2. 2. It acquaints us with that supreme felicity, that chief good whereof Philosophy could only give us a name; and it shews us the means, marks us out a path which will infallibly lead us to it. Accordingly we find that *Solomon* after all the accurate search he had made to find *what was that good for the sons of men*; he shuts up his inquest in this plain conclusion: *Fear God and keep his commandments; for God shall bring every work unto judgment*, Ecclef. 12. 13, 14. The regulating our lives so by the rules of Piety, as may acquit us at our final account, is the most eligible thing that falls within human cognizance; and that not only in relation



tion to the superlative happiness of the next world, but even to the quiet and tranquillity of this. For alas, we are impotent giddy creatures, swai'd somtimes by one passion, somtimes by another; nay often the interfearing of our appetites makes us irresolute which we are to gratify, whilst in the interim their struggling agitates and turmoils the mind. And what can be more desirable in such a case, then to put our selves under a wiser conduct than our own; and as oppress'd States use to defeat all lesser pretenders by becoming homagers to som more potent: so for us to deliver our selves from the tyranny of our lusts, by giving up our obedience to him whose service is perfect freedom.

81. WERE there no other advantage of the exchange, but the bringing us under fixt and determinat Laws, 'twere very considerable. Every man would gladly know the terms of his subjection, and have som standing rule to guide himself by; and Gods Laws are so; we may certainly know what he requires of us: but the mandates of our passions are arbitrary and extemporary: what pleases them to day disgusts them to morrow; and we must alwaies be in readiness to do we know not what; and of all the Arbitrary governments that men either feel or fear, this is doubtless the most miserable. I wish our apprehensions of it were but as sensible: and

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then we should think the holy Scripture did us the office of a Patriot, in offering us a rescue from so vile a slavery.

82. AND that it do's make us this offer, is manifest by the whole tenor of the Bible. For first it rowzes and awakes us to a sense of our condition, shews us that what we call liberty, is indeed the saddest servitude; that *he that committeth sin is the servant of sin*, Jo. 8. 34. that those vices which pretend to serve and gratify us, do really subdue and enslave us, and fetter when they seem to embrace: and whereas the will in all other oppressions retains its liberty, this tyranny brings that also into vassallage: renders our spirits so mean and servile, that we chuse bondage; are apt to say with the Israelites, *Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians*, Ex. 14. 12.

83. AND what greater kindness can be don for people in this forlorn abject condition, then to animate them to cast off this yoke, and recover their freedom. And to this are most of the Scripture exhortations address'd; as may be seen in a multitude of places, particularly in the sixth chapter to the *Romans*, the whole scope whereof is directly to this purpose.

84. NOR do's it only sound the alarm, put us upon the contest with our enemies, but it assists us in it, furnishes us with that *whole armor of God* which we find describ'd, *Eph. 6. 13*. Nay  
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further it excites our courage, by assuring us that if we will not basely surrender our selves, we can never be overpower'd if we do but stand our ground; resist our enemy, *he will fly from us*; Ja. 4. 7. And to that purpose it directs us under what banner we are to list our selves; even his who *bath spoil'd principalities and powers*, Col. 2. 15. to whose conduct and discipline if we constantly adhere, we cannot miss of victory.

85. AND then lastly it sets before us the prize of this conquest; that we shall not only recover our liberty, manumit our selves from the vilest bondage to the vilest and cruellest oppressors; but we shall be crown'd for it too, be rewarded for being kind to our selves, and be made happy eternally hereafter for being willing to be happy here.

89. AND sure these are terms so apparently advantageous, that he must be infinitely stupid ( foolish to destruction ) that will not be thus made wise unto salvation, that despises or cavils at this divine Book, which means him so much good, which designs to make him live here generously and according to the dignity of his nature, and in the next world to have that nature sublimated, and exalted, made more capacious of those refin'd and immense felicities, which there await all who will qualify themselves for them; *who* ( as the Apostle speaks ) *by patient*

*continuance in well doing seek for glory, and honor, and immortality, eternal life, Rom. 2. 7.*

87. BUT besides the greatest and principal advantages which concern our spiritual interest, it takes in also the care of our secular, directs us to such a managery of our selves, as is naturally apt to promote a quiet and happy life. Its injunction to live peaceable with all men, keeps us out of the way of many misadventures, which turbulent unruly spirits meet with, and so secures our peace. So also as to wealth, it puts us into the fairest road to riches by prescribing diligence in our callings: what is thus got being like sound flesh, which will stick by us; whereas the hasty growth of ill-gotten wealth is but a tumor and impostume, which the bigger it swells, the sooner it bursts and leaves us lanker then before. In like manner it shews us also how to guard our reputation, by *providing honest things not only in the sight of God, but also in the sight of men, Cor. 8. 28. by abstaining even from all appearance of evil, 1 Thes. 5. 22. and making our light shine before men, Mat. 5. 16.* It provides too for our ease and tranquillity, supersedes our anxious cares and sollicitud's, by directing us to *cast our burden upon the Lord, Psal. 55. 22.* and by a reliance on his providence how to secure to our selves all we really want. Finally it fixes us in all the changes, supports us under all the pressures,

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comforts us amidst all the calamities of this life, by assuring us they shall *all work together for good to those that love God*; Ro. 8. 28.

88. NOR do's the Scripture design to promote our interests consider'd only singly and personally, but also in relation to Societies and Communities; it gives us the best rules of distributive and commutative Justice; teaches us to *render to all their dues*, Ro. 13. 7. to keep our words, to observe inviolably all our pacts and contracts; nay tho' *they prove to our damage*, Psa. 15. 4. and to preserve exact fidelity and truth; which are the sinews of human commerce. It infuses into us noble and generous principles, to prefer a common good before our private: and that highest flight of Ethnic vertue, that of dying for ones Country, is no more then the Scripture prescribes even for our common brethren, 1 Jo. 3. 16.

89. BUT besides these generals, it descends to more minute directions accommodated to our several circumstances; it gives us appropriate rules in reference to our distinct relations, whether natural, civil, ecclesiastical, or æconomical. And if men would but universally conform to them, to what a blessed harmony would it tune the world? what order and peace would it introduce? There would then be no oppressive Governors, nor mutinous Subjects; no unnatural Parents, nor  
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contumacious Children: no idle Shepherds, or straying Flocks: none of those domestic jars which oft disquiet, and sometimes subvert families: all would be calm and serene; and give us in reality that golden Age, whereof the Poets did but dream.

90. THIS tendency of the Scripture is remarkably acknowledg'd in all our public Judicatories, where before any testimony is admitted, we cause the person that is to give his testimony, first to lay hold of with his hands, then with his mouth to kiss the holy Scriptures: as if it were impossible for those hands, which held the mysteries of Truth, to be immediatly employ'd in working falsehood; or that those lips which had ador'd those holy Oracles, should be polluted with perjuries and lies. And I fear, the civil Government is exceedingly shaken at this day in its firmest foundation, by the little regard is generally had of the holy Scriptures, and what is consequent thereto, the oaths that are taken upon them.

91. 'TIS true, we are far remov'd from that state which *Esaiab* prophecied of under the Gospel, tho we have the Bible among us; that when *the Law should go forth of Sion, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem, they should beat their swords into plow-shares, and their spears into pruning hooks, Es. 2. 4.* but that is not from any defect in it, but from  
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our own perverseness: *we have it*, but (as the Apostle speaks in another sense) *as if we had it not*, 1 Cor. 7. 29. We have it (that is, use it) to purposes widely different from what it means. Som have it as a *Supersedeas* to all the duty it enjoins; and so they can but cap texts, talk glibly of Scripture, are not at all concern'd to practice it: som have it as their Arsenal, to furnish them with weapons, not against their spiritual enemies, but their secular: applying all the damnatory sentences they there find, to all those to whose persons or opinions they have prejudice. And som have it as a Scene of their mirth, a topic of raillery, dress their profane and scurrilous jests in its language; and study it for no other end but to abuse it. And whilst we treat it at this vile rate, no wonder we are never the better for it. For alas, what will it avail us to have the most soveraign Balsom in our possession, if instead of applying it to our wounds, we trample it under our feet?

92 But tho we may frustrate the use, we cannot alter the nature of things. Gods design in giving us the Scripture was to make us as happy as our nature is capable of being; and the Scripture is excellently adapted to this end: for as to our eternal felicity, all that believe there is any such state, must acknowledg the Scripture chalks us out the ready way to it: not only because 'tis dictated  
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by God who infallibly knows it, but also by its prescribing those things which are in themselves best; and which a sober Heathen would adjudge fittest to be rewarded. And as to our temporal happiness, I dare appeal to any unprejudic'd man, whether any thing can contribute more to the peace and real happiness of mankind, than the universal practice of the Scripture rules would do. Would God we would all conspire to make the experiment; and then doubtless, not only our reason, but our sense too would be convinc'd of it.

93. AND as the design is thus beneficial, so in the second place is it as extensive also. Time was when the Jews had the inclosure of divine Revelation; when the Oracles of God were their peculiar depositum, and the *Heathen had not the knowledge of his Laws*, Ps. 147. ult. but since that by the goodness of God the *Gentiles are become fellow-heirs*, Eph. 3. 6. he hath also deliver'd into their hands the deeds and evidences of their future state, given them the holy Scriptures as the exact and authentic registres of the covenant between God and man, and these not to be like the heathen Oracles appropriated to some one or two particular places, so that they cannot be consulted but at the expence of a pilgrimage; but laid open to the view of all that will believe themselves concern'd.



94. IT was a large commission our Savior gave his Disciples; *go preach the Gospel to every creature*, Mar. 16. 15. (which in the narrowest acception must be the Gentile world) and yet their oral Gospel did not reach farther then the written: for wherever the Christian Faith was planted, the holy Scriptures were left as the records of it; nay, as the conservers of it too; the standing rule by which all corruptions were to be detected. 'Tis true, the entire Canon of the New Testament, as we now have it, was not all at once deliver'd to the Church; the Gospels and Epistles being successively writ, as the needs of Christians, and the encroachments of Heretics gave occasion: but at last they became all together the common magazine of the Church, to furnish arms both defensive and offensive. For as the Gospel puts in our hands the shield of Faith, so the Epistles help us to hold it, that it may not be wrested out of our hands again, either by the force of persecution, or the sly insinuations of vice or heresy.

95. THUS the Apostles like prudent leaders, have beat up the Ambushes, discover'd the snares that were laid for us; and by discomfiting Satans forlorn hope, that earliest Set of false teachers and corrupt practices which then invaded the Church, have laid a foundation of victory to the succeeding Ages,

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if they will but keep close to their conduct, adhere to those sacred Writings they have left behind them in every Church for that purpose.

96. Now what was there deposited, was design'd for the benefit of every particular member of that Church. The Bible was not committed (like the *Regalia*, or rarities of a Nation) to be kept under lock and key (and consequently to constitute a profitable office for the keepers) but expos'd like the Brazen Serpent for universal view and benefit: that sacred Book (like the common air) being every mans propriety, yet no mans inclosure: yet there are a generation of men whose eies have bin evil, because Gods have bin good; who have seal'd up this spring, monopoliz'd the word of Life, and will allow none to partake of it but such persons, and in such proportions as they please to retail it: an attempt very insolent in respect of God, whose purpose they contradict; and very injurious in respect of man, whose advantage they obstruct. The iniquity of it will be very apparent, if we consider what is offer'd in the following Section.

SECT.

## S E C T. IV.

*The Custody of the holy Scripture is a privilege and right of the Christian Church, and every member of it; which cannot without impiety to God, and injustice unto it and them, be taken away or impeacht.*

**B**ESIDES the keeping of the divine Law, which is obsequious, and imports a due regard to all its Precepts, commonly express'd in Scripture by *keeping the commandments, hearkning to, and obeying the voice of the Lord, walking in his waies, and observing and doing his statutes and his judgments*: there is a possessory keeping it, in reference to our selves and others; in respect whereof, Almighty God, *Deut. 6.* and elsewhere frequently, having enjoind the people of Israel, *to love the Lord their God with all their heart, and with all their soul, and with all their might, and that the words which he commanded them should be in their heart*, he adds, *that they shall teach them diligently to their children, and shall talk of them when they sit down in their houses, and when they walk by the way, and when they lie down, and when they rise up: and that they bind them for a sign upon their hand, and that they shall be as*

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*frontlets between their eies, and that they shall write them upon the posts of their house, and on their gates. So justly was the Law call'd the Scripture, being written by them, and worn upon the several parts of the body; inscrib'd upon the walls of their houses, the entrance of their dores and gates of their Cities; and in a word, placed before their eies wherever they convers'd.*

2. AND this was granted to the Jews, as matter of privilege and favor. *To them, saies Saint Paul, Rom. 9. 4. pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the Law.* And the same Saint Paul, at the 3. chap. 2. v. of that Epistle, unto the question, *what advantage hath the Jew, or what profit is there of circumcision*, answers, that it is *much every way, chiefly because unto them were committed the Oracles of God.* This depositum or trust was granted to the Fathers, that it should be continued down unto their children. *He made a covenant, saies David, Ps. 78. v. 5. with Jacob, and gave Israel a Law, which he commanded our Fore-fathers to teach their children, that their posterity might know it, and the children which were yet unborn: to the intent that when they came up, they might shew their children the same.* Which Scripture by a perpetual succession was to be handed down unto the Christian Church, the Apostles on all occasions appealing unto them, as being  
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read in the Synagogues every Sabbath day, Act. 13. 27. and also privatly, in their hands; so that they might at plesure search into them, Jo. 5. 39. Act. 17. 11. Hereupon the Jews are by Saint *Austin* call'd the *Capsarii*, or servants that carried the Christians Books. And *Athanasius* in this Tract of the Incarnation, saies, *The Law was not for the Jews only, nor were the Prophets sent for them alone; but that Nation was the Divinity-Schole of the whole world; from whence they were to fetch the knowledg of God, and the way of spiritual living*: which amounts to what the Apostle saies, Galat. 3. 24. *That the Law was a Schole-master to bring us unto Christ.*

3. AND 'tis observable that the very same word, Rom. 3. 2. in the Text even now recited, which expresse the committing of the Oracles of God to the Jews, is made use of constantly by Saint *Paul*, when he declares the trust and dury incumbent on him in the preaching of the Gospel: of which, see 1 Cor. 9. 17. Gal. 2. 7. 1 Thes. 2. 4. 1 Tim. 1. 11. Tit. 1. 3. And therefore, as he saies, 1 Cor. 9. *Tho I preach the Gospel I have nothing to glory of; for necessity is laid upon me, yea, woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel, for if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, a dispensation of the Gospel is committed unto me*: So may all Christians say; if we our selves keep and transmit to our posterities the holy

holy Scriptures, we have nothing to glory of, for a necessity is laid upon us, and we be unto us if we do not our selves keep, and transmit to our posterity the holy Scriptures. If we do this thing willingly, we have a reward, but if against our will, the custody of the Gospel, and at least that dispensation of it, is committed to us. But if we are Traditors, and give up our Bibles, or take them away from others; let us consider how black an apostacy and sacrilege we shall incur.

4. THE Mosaic Law was a temporary constitution, and only *a shadow of good things to come*, Heb. 10. 1. but the Gospel being in its duration as well as its intendment, *everlasting*, Rev. 14. 6. and to remain *when time shall be no more*, Rev. 10. 6. it is an infinitely more precious *depositum*, and so with greater care and solemn attestation to be preserv'd. Not only the Clergy, or the people of one particular Church, nor the Clergy of the universal are intrusted with this care; but 'tis the charge, the privilege and duty of every Christian man, that either is, or was, or shall be in the world; even that collective Church which above all competition, *is the pillar and ground of truth*, 1 Tim. 3. 15. against which the assaults of men and devils, and even the *gates of hell shall not prevail*, Mat. 16. 18.

5. THE Gospels were not written by their holy Pen-men to instruct the Apostles, but to the

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the Christian Church, *that they might believe Jesus was the Christ, the son of God, and that believing they might have life thro his name*, Jo. 20. 31. The Epistles were not addrest peculiarly to the Bishops and Deacons, *but all the holy brethren, to the Churches of God that are sanctified in Jesus Christ, and to all those that call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ*, Rom. 1, 7. 1 Cor. 1. 2. 2 Cor. 1. 1. Galat. 1. 2. Eph. 1. 1. Col. 4. 16. 1 Thes. 5. 27. Phil. 1. 1. Jam. 1. 1. 1 Pet. 1. 1. 2 Pet. 1. 1. Revel. 1. 4. Or if by chance som one or two of the Epistles were addrest to an Ecclesiastic person, as those to *Timothy* and *Titus*, their purport plainly refers to the community of Christians, and the *depositum* committed to their trust; *Tim.* 6. 20. And Saint *John* on the other side directs his Epistles to those who were plainly secular; to fathers, young men and little children; and a Lady and her children, Epist. 1. chap. 2. 12. 13, 14. and Epist. 2. 1. 1.

6. BUT besides the interest which every Christian has in the custody of the Scripture upon the account of its being a *depositum* intrusted to him, he has also another no less forcible; that 'tis the Testament of his Savior, by which he becomes a Son of God, *no more a Servant but a Son; and if he be a Son, it is the Apostles inference, that he is then an heir, an heir of God thro Christ*, Gal. 4. 7. Now as he who is heir to an estate, is also to the deeds

deeds and conveyances thereof; which without injury cannot be detain'd, or if they be, there is a remedy at Law for the recovery of them: So it fares in our Christian inheritance; every believer by the privilege of faith, is made a son of *Abraham*, and an heir of the promises made unto the fathers, whereby he has an hereditary interest in the Old Testament; and also by the privilege of the same Faith he has a firm right to the *purchase possession*, Eph. 1. 14. and the charter thereof, the New. Therefore the detention of the Scriptures, which are made up of these two parts, is a manifest injustice, and sacrilegious invasion of right, which the person wrong'd is impower'd, nay, is strictly oblig'd by all lawful means to vindicate.

7. WHICH invasion of right, will appear more flagrant when the nature and importance of it is consider'd; which relating to mens spiritual interest, renders the violation infinitely more injurious then it could be in any secular. I might mention several detriments consequent to this detention of Scripture, even as many as there are benefits appendant to the free use of it; but there is one of so fundamental and comprehensive a nature, that I need name no more; and that is, that it delivers men up to any delusion their teachers shall impose upon them, by depriving them of means of detecting them.

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Where there is no standard or measures, 'tis easy for men to falsify both; and no less easy is it to adulterate doctrines, where no recourse can be had to the primary rule. Now that there is a possibility that false teachers may arise, we have all assurance; nay we have the word of Christ, and his Apostles that it should be so: and all Ecclesiastic Story to attest it has bin so. And if in the first and purest times (those Ages of more immediat illumination) the *God of this world* found instruments whereby to *blind mens minds*, 2 Cor. 4. 4. it cannot be suppos'd impossible or improbable he should do so now.

8. BUT to leave generals, and to speak to the case of that Church which magisterially prohibits Scripture to the vulgar: she manifestly stands liable to that charge of our Savior, Luk. 11. 52. *Ye have taken away the key of knowledge*: and by allowing the common people no more Scripture then what she affords them in their Sermons and privat Manuals, keeps it in her power to impose on them what she pleases. For 'tis sure those portions she selects for them, shall be none of those which clash with the doctrines she recommends: and whenever she will use this power to the corrupting their faith, or worship (yea, or their manners either.) they must brutishly submit to it, because they cannot bring her dictats to the test.

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9. But 'twill be said, this danger she wards by her doctrine of infallibility: that is, she enervates a probable supposition attested by event, by an impossible one confuted by event. For 'tis certain, that all particular Churches may err; and tho the consciousness of that, forces the Roman Church upon the absurd pretence of universality, to assert her infallibility; yet alas, *Tyber* may as well call it self the Ocean, or *Italy* the world, as the Roman Church may name it self the universal; whilest 'tis so apparent that far the less part of Christians are under her communion. And if she be but a particular Church, she has no immunity from errors; nor those under her from having those errors (how pernicious soever) impos'd upon them. As to her having actually err'd, and in diverse particulars, the proof of that has bin the work of so many Volumes, that 'twould be impertinent here to undertake it: I shall only instance in that of Image-Worship; a practice perfectly irreconcilable with the second Commandment; and doubtless, clearly discern'd by her to be so: upon which account it is, that tho by Translations and Paraphrases she wrests and moulds other Texts to comply with her doctrines, yet she dares not trust to those arts for this: but takes a more compendious course, and expunges the Commandment; as is evident in her Catechisms and

and other Manuals. Now a Church that can thus sacrilegiously purloin one Commandment ( and such a one as God has own'd himself the most jealously concern'd in ) and to delude her children split another to make up the number, may as her needs require, subtract and divide what others she please: and then whilst all resort to Scripture is obstructed; how fatal a hazard must those poor souls run, who are oblig'd to follow these blind, or rather these winking guides into the ditch?

10. BUT all these eriminations she retorts by objecting the dangers of allowing the Scriptures to the vulgar, which she accuses as the spring of all Sects, Schisms, and Heresies. To which I answer first, that supposing this were true, 'twas certainly foreseen by God, who notwithstanding laid no restraint; probably as fore-seeing, that the dangers of implicit faith ( to which such a restraint must subiect men ) would be far greater: and if God saw fit to indulge the liberty, those that shall oppose it, must certainly think they do not only partake, but have transplanted infallibility from God to themselves.

11. BUT secondly, 'tis not generally true, that Sects, Schisms, and Heresies are owing to this liberty; All Ecclesiastical Story shews us that they were not the illiterat Lay-men, but the learned Clarks who were usually the broachers of Heresies. And indeed many of

them were so subtil and aerial, as could never have bin forg'd in grösser brains; but were founded not on Scripture merely mistaken, but rackt and distorted with nice criticisms, and quirks of Logic, as severall of the Ancients complain: som again sprang from that ambition of attaining, or impatience of missing Ecclesiastical dignities: which appropriates them to the Clergy. So that if the abuse infer a forfeiture of the use, the Learned have of all others the least title to the Scriptures; and perhaps those who now ingross them, the least title of all the Learned.

12. ON the other side, Church-story indeed mentions som lay-propugners of Heresies; but those for the most part were either so gross and bestial; as disparag'd and confuted themselves and Authors, and rose rather from the brutish inclination of the men, then from their mistakes of Scripture: or else they were by the immediat infusion of the devil, who backt his heretical suggestions with sorceries and lying wonders, as in *Simon Magus*, *Menander*, &c. And for later times, tho sometimes there happens among the vulgar a few pragmatic spirits, that love to tamper with the obscurest Texts, and will undertake to expound before they understand; yet that is not their common temper: the generality are rather in the other extreme, stupid and unobservant even of the plainest doctrines,  
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And if to this be objected the multitude of Quakers and Fanatics, who generally are of the ignorant sort; I answer, that 'tis manifest the first propugners of those tenets in *Germany* were not seduc'd into them by mistakes of Scripture, but industriously form'd them, at once to disguise and promote their villainous designs of sedition and rapine: and as for those amongst us, it is not at all certain that their first errors were their own productions: there are vehement presumptions that the seeds were sown by greater Artificers; whose first business was to unhinge them from the Church, and then to fill their heads with strange Chimera's of their privileges and perfections; and by that intoxication of spiritual pride, dispose them for all delusions: and thereby render them, like *Samsons* Foxes, fit instruments to set all in combustion.

13. BUT admit this were but a conjecture, and that they were the sole Authors of their own frenzy; how appears it that the liberty of reading the Scripture was the cause of it? Had these men bin of the Romish communion, and so bin interdicted privat reading, yet som broken parts of Scripture would have bin in Sermons and Books of devotion communicated to them; had it not bin as possible for them to have wrested what they heard as what they read? In one respect it seems rather  
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ther more likely: for in those loose and incidental quotations the connexion is sometimes not so discernable: and many Texts there are whose sense is so interwoven with the context, that without consulting that, there may be very pernicious mistakes: on which account it is probably more safe that the Auditor should have Bibles to consult. So that this restraint of Scripture is a very fallible expedient of the infallible Church. And indeed themselves have in event found it so; for if it were so sovereign a prophylactic against error, how comes it to pass that so many of their members who were under that discipline have revolted from them into that which they call heresy? If they say, the defection was made by some of the Learned to whom the Scripture was allow'd, why do they not (according to their way of arguing) take it from them also upon that experiment of its mischief, and confine it only to the infallible chair? but if they own them to have bin unlearn'd (as probably the Albigenes and Waldenses, &c. were) they may see how insignificant a guard this restraint is against error: and learn how little is got by that policy which controls the divine Wisdom.

14 NOR can they take shelter in the example of the primitive Christians: for they in the constant use of the holy Scriptures yielded not unto the Jews. Whereas the Jews had  
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the Scriptures read publicly to them every Sabbath day; which *Josephus* against *Appion* thus expresses: *Moses propounded to the Jews the most excellent and necessary learning of the Law; not by hearing it once or twice, but every seventh day laying aside their works, he commanded them to assemble for the hearing of the Law, and thoroughly and exactly to learn it.* Parallel to this was the practice of the primitive Church, perform'd by the Lector, or Reader, of which *Justin Martyr* in his 2. Apol. gives this account. *On the day call'd Sunday, all that abide in towns or the countries about, meet in one place, and the writings of the Apostles and Prophets are read, so far as there is place.* So *Tertullian* in his Apol. describing the offices in the public Assemblies: *We feed our faith with the sacred Words, we raise our hopes, and establish our reliance.*

15. AND as the Jews thought it indecent for persons professing piety, to let three daies pass without the offices thereof in the congregation; and therefore met in their Synagogues upon every Tuesday and Thursday in the week, and there perform'd the duties of fasting, praier, and hearing the holy Scriptures; concerning which is the boast of the Pharisee, *Luk. 18. 12.* in conformity here to the Christians also, their Sabbath being brought forward from the Saturday to the day following; that the like number of daies might not pass them without performing the  
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aforesaid duties in the congregation; met together on the Wednesdaies and Fridaies, which were the daies of Station, so frequently mention'd in *Tertullian*, and others, the first writers of the Church. *Tertullian* expressly saies, that the Christians dedicated to the offices of Piety, *the fourth and sixth day of the week*: and *Clemens Alex.* saies of the Christians, that they understood the secret reasons of their weekly fasts, to wit, *those of the fourth day of the week, and that of preparation before the Sabbath; commonly call'd Wednesday and Friday.* Where, by the way, we may take notice what ground there is for the observance of the Wednesday and Friday in our Church, and the Litanies then appointed, so much neglected in this profligate Age.

16. But secondly, as the Jews were diligent in the privat reading of the Scripture; being taught it from their infancy, which custom *Saint Paul* refers to *1 Tim. 3. 15.* whereof *Josephus* against *Appion* saies, *That if a man ask any Jew concerning the Laws, he will tell every thing readier then his name: for learning them from the first time they have sense of any thing; they retain them imprinted in their minds.* So were the first Christians equally industrious in improving their knowledg of divine Truth. *The whole life of a Christian,* saies *Clem. Alex. Strom. 1. 7.* *is a holy solemnity, there his sacrifices are prayers and praises, before*



done every meal he has the readings of the holy Scriptures, and Psalms, and Hymns at the time of his meals. Which Tertullian also describes in his Apol. and Saint Cyprian in the end of the Epist. to Donatus.

17. AND this is farther evidenc'd by the early and numerous versions of the Scriptures into all vulgar Languages; concerning which Theodoret speaks in his Book of the Cure of the Affections of the Greeks, Serm. 5. *We Christians*, (says he) *are enabled to shew the power of Apostolic and prophetic doctri<sup>n</sup>s, which have fill'd all Countries under Heaven. For that which was formerly utter'd in Hebrew, is not only translated into the Language of the Grecians, but also the Romans, Egyptians, Persians, Indians, Armenians, Scythians, Samaritans; and in a word to all the Languages that are us'd by any Nation.* The same is said by Saint Chrysostom in his first Homily upon Saint John.

18. NOR was this don by the blind zeal of inconsiderable men, but the most eminent Doctors of the Church were concern'd herein: such as Origen, who with infinit labor contriv'd the Hexapla. Saint Chrysostom, who translated the New Testament, Psalms, and some part of the Old Testament into the Armenian Tongue as witnesses Geor. Alex. in the life of Chrysost. So Viphilas the first Bishop of the Goths translated the holy Scripture into the Gothic; as Socrat. Eccl. Hist. l. 4. cap. 33.

and others testify. Saint *Jerom*, who translated them not only into Latin from the Hebrew, the Old Italic version having bin from the Greek; but also into his native vulgar Dalmatic: which he saies himself in his Epistle to *Sophronius*.

19. But the peoples having them for their privat and constant use, appears farther by the Heathens making the extorting of them a part of their persecution: and when diverse did faint in that trial, and basely surrender'd them, we find the Church level'd her severity only against the offending persons, did not (according to the Romish equity) punish the innocent, by depriving them of that sacred Book, because the others had so unworthily prostituted it (tho the prevention of such a profanation for the future had bin as fair a plea for it as the Romanists do now make:), but on the contrary the primitive Fathers are frequent, nay indeed importunat in their exhortations to the privat study of holy Scripture, which they recommend to Christians of all Ranks, Ages, and Sexes.

20. As an instance hereof let us hear *Clemens of Alex.* in his Exhort. The Word, saies he, *is not hid from any, it is a common light that shineth to all men; there is no obscurity in it; hear it you that be far off, and hear it you that are nigh.*

21. To

21. To this purpose St. *Jerom* speaks in his Epistle to *Leta*, whom he directs in the education of her young daughter, and advises, *that instead of gems and silk, she be enamour'd with the holy Scripture; wherein not gold, or skins, or Babylonian embroideries, but a correct and beautiful variety producing faith, will recommend its self. Let her first learn the Psalter, and be entertain'd with those songs; then be instructed unto life by the Proverbs of Solomon: let her learn from Ecclesiastes to despise worldly things; transcribe from Job the practice of patience and vertue: let her pass then to the Gospels, and never let them be out of her hands: and then imbibe with all the faculties of the mind, the Acts of the Apostles, and Epistles. When she has enrich'd the store-house of her breast with these treasures, let her learn the Prophets, the Heptateuch, or books of Moses, Joshua and Judges, the books of Kings and Chronicles, the volumes of Ezra and Esther, and lastly the Canticles. And indeed, this Father is so concern'd to have the unletter'd female sex skilful in the Scriptures, that tho he sharply rebukes their pride and over-wening; he not only frequently resolves their doubts concerning difficult places in the said Scriptures, but dedicates several of his Commentaries to them.*

22. THE same is to be said of Saint *Austin*, who in his Epistles to unletter'd Laics, en-

courages their enquiries concerning the Scripture, assuring *Volusianus* Ep. 3. that it speaks those things that are plain to the heart of the learned and unlearned, as a familiar friend; in the mysterious, mounts not up into high phrases which might deter a slow and unlearned mind, (as the poor are in their addresses to the rich;) but invites all with lowly speech, feeding with manifest truth, and exercising with secret. And Ep. 1. 21. tells the devout *Proba*; that in this world, where we are absent from the Lord, and walk by faith and not by sight, the soul is to think it self desolate, and never cease from prayer, and the words of divine and holy Scripture, &c.

23. SAINT *Chrysostom* in his third Homily of *Lazarus* thus addresses himself to married persons, house-holders, and people engaged in trades and secular professions; telling them, that the reading of the Scripture is a great defensive against sin; kind on the other side, the ignorance thereof is a deep and head-long precipice; that not to know the Law of God, is the utter loss of salvation; that this has caus'd heresies, and corruption of life, and has confounded the order of things: for it cannot be by any means, that his labor should be fruitless, who employs himself in a daily and attentive reading of the Scripture.

24. I am not, saies the same St. *Chrys.* Hom. 9. on *Colos. 3.* a Monk, I have wife and children, and

and the cares of his family. But in a destructive opinion, that the reading of the Scripture pertains only to those who have addicted themselves to a monastic life; when the reading of Scripture is much more necessary for secular persons; for they also converse abroad; and receive frequent wounds; and are in great need of remedies and preservatives. So Hom. 2. on Mat. Hearken all you which are secular, both you ought to order your wives and children and here you are particularly enjoined to read the Scriptures, and that not perfunctorily, or by chance, but very diligently, and as it were. LIKEWISE Hom. 3. on Luc. What sayest thou, O man? it is not thy business to turn over the Scriptures, being distracted by innumerable cares; no, thou hast therefore the greater obligation: others do not so much stand in need of the aids of the Scripture, as they who are conversant in much business. Farther, Hom. 8. on Heb. I beseech you neglect not the reading of the Scriptures; but whether we comprehend the meaning of what is spoken or not, let us always be conversant in them; for daily meditation strengthens the memory, and it frequently happens that what you never canst find out, if thou attend it again, thou wilt the next day discover: for God of his goodness will enlighten the mind. It were endless to transcribe all the Exhortations of the ancient Doctors and Fathers of the Church; they not only permitted, but earnestly press upon all Christians, whatever their

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estate or condition were, the constant reading of the holy Scripture. Nor indeed was their restraint ever heard of till the Church of Rome had espous'd such doctrines as would not bear the test of Scripture; and then as those who deal in false wares are us'd to do, they found it necessary to proportion their lights accordingly.

26. *THIS Peter Sutor* in his second Book cap. 12. of the Translation of the Scripture honestly confesses, saying, *that whereas many things are enjoin'd which are not expressely in Scripture, the unlearned observing this, will be apt to murmur and complain that so heavy burthens are laid upon them, and their Christian liberty infring'd. They will easily be with-drawn from observing the Constitutions of the Church, when they find that they are not contain'd in the Law of Christ.* And that this was not a frivolous suggestion, the desperat attempt of the Romanists above mention'd, in leaying out the second Commandment in their Primers and Catechisms which they communicate to the people, may pass for an irrefragable evidence; For what Lay-man would not be shockt, to find Almighty God command, *not to make any graven image, nor the likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth; that no one should bow down to them, nor worship them.* when he sees the contrary is practis'd and commanded by the Church.

27. But



27. BUT would God none but the Romanist were impeachable of this detention of Scripture: there are too many among us that are thus false and envious to themselves: and what the former do upon policy and pretence of reverence, those do upon mere osi-  
tancy and avow'd profaness; which are much worse inducements. And for such as these to declaim against detention of the Scripture, is like the Law-suits of those who contend only about such little punctilio's as themselves design no advantage from, but only the worsting their adversaries: and it would be much safer for them to lie under the interdict of others, then thus to restrain themselves: even as much as the errors of obedience are more excusable, then those of content and profaness.

28. AND here I would have it seriously consider'd that the Edict of *Dioctetian* for the demolishing the Christian Churches, and the burning their Bibles; became the character and particular aggravation of his most bloody persecution. Now should Almighty God call us to the like trial, should Antichristian violence, whether heathen or other, take from us our Churches and our Bibles, what comfort could we have in that calamity, if our content of those blessing drove them from us; nay, prevented persecution, and bereft us of them even whilst we had them in  
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our power? He who neglects to make his constant resort unto the Church, which by Gods mercy now stands open; or to read diligently the holy Scriptures, which by the same divine Goodness are free for him to use, in his own *Diocletian's* land without the terrors of death, or torments, has renounc'd, if not the Faith, the great instruments of its conveyance, and pledg of God Almightyes presence among the sons of men.

29. But what if men either upon the one motive or the other, will not read; yet the Scriptures continue still most worthy to be read: they retain still their propriety for all those excellent ends to which God design'd them; and as the Prophet tells the Jews, *Ex. i. 5. whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, they shall know there has bin a Prophet among them*; so whether we will take the benefit or no, we shall one day find that the holy Scriptures would have made us *wise unto salvation*. If thro our fault alone they fail to do so, they will one day assume a less grateful office; and from guides and assistants, become accusers and witnesses against us.

SECT.

S E C T. V.

*The Scripture has great propriety and fitness toward the attainment of its excellent end.*

WE are now in the next place to consider how exactly the holy Scriptures are adapted to those great ends to which they are directed: how sufficient they are for that important negotiation on which they are sent: and that we shall certainly find them, if we look on them either intrinsically, or circumstantially. For the first of these notions we need only to reflect on the third Part of this discourse, where the Scripture in respect of the subject Matter is evinc'd to be a system of the most excellent Laws, backt with the most transcendent rewards and punishments; and the certainty of those confirm'd by such pregnant instances of Gods mercies and vengeance in this world, as are the surest gages and earnest of what we are bid to expect in another.

2 Now what method imaginable can there be used to rational creatures of more force and energy? Nay it seems to descend  
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even to our passions and accommodates it self to our several inclinations. And seeing how few Profelytes there are to bare and naked vertue, and how many to interest and advantage; God closes with them upon their own terms, and do's not so much injoin as buy those little services he asks from us.

3. BUT because som mens natures are so disingenuous as to hate to be oblig'd no less then to be reform'd, the Scripture has goads and scourges to drive such beasts as will not be led; terrors and threatnings, and those of most formidable sorts, to affright those who will not be allur'd. Nay lest incredulous men should question the reality of future rewards or punishments, the Scripture gives as sensible evidence of them as we are capable of receiving in this world; by registering such signal protections and judgments proportion'd to vertue and vice, as sufficiently attests the Psalmists Axiom: *Doubtless there is a God that judgeth the earth*, Psal. 58. 11. and leaves nothing to the impenitent sinner, but a *fearful expectation of that fiery indignation* threatned hereafter; *Heb. 10. 27.*

4. AND now methinks the Scripture seems to be that *net* our Savior speaks of, *that caught of every sort*, Mat. 13. 47. it is of so vast a compass, that it must, one would think, fetch in all kind of tempers: and sure had we not mixt natures with fiends, contracted som of  
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their malice and obstinacy, mere human pravity could not hold out.

5. AND as the holy Scripture is thus fitly proportion'd to its end in respect of the subject matter, so is it also in reference to its circumstances, which all conspire to render it, *the power of God unto salvation*, Ro. I. 16. In the first rank of those we must place its divine original, which stamps it with an uncontrollable authority; and is an infallible security that the matter of it is perfectly true: since it proceeds from that essential verity which cannot abuse us with fraudulent promises or threatnings: and from that infinite power that cannot be impeded in the execution of what he purposes.

6. YET to render this circumstance efficacious there needs another; to wit, that its being the word of God be sufficiently testifi'd to us: and we have in the fore-going discourse evinced it to be so; and that in the utmost degree that a matter of that kind is capable of, beyond which no sober man will require evidence in any thing. And certainly these two circumstances thus united, have a mighty force to impress the dictates of Scripture on us. And we must rebel against God and our own convictions too, to hold out against it.

7. A third circumstance relates to the frame and compofure of this divine Book,

both as to method, and stile: concerning which I have already made som reflexions. But now that I may speak more distinctly, I observe it takes its rise from the first point of time wherein 'twas possible for mankind to be concern'd; and so gradually proceeds to its fall and renovation; shews us first our need of a Redeemer, and then points us out who it is by types and promises in the Old Testament, and by way of history and completion in the New. In the former it acquaints us with that pedagogy of the Law which God design'd as our *Schole-master to bring us to Christ*, Gal. 3. 25. and in the Gospel shews us yet a more excellent way; presents us with those more sublime elevated doctrines, which Christ came down from heaven to revele.

8. As for the stile, that is full of grateful variety, sometimes high and majestic, as becomes that *high and holy one that inhabiteth eternity*, Esai. 57. 15 and sometimes so humble and after the manner of men, as agrees to the other part of his Characters, *his dwelling is with him that is of an humble spirit*, Esay 57. 15. I know profane wits are apt to brand this as an unevenness of stile: but they may as well accuse the various notes of Music as destructive to harmony, or blame an Orator for being able to tune his tongue to the most different strains.

9. ANOTHER excellency of the stile, is its propriety to the several subjects it treats of. When it speaks of such things as God would not have men pry into, it wraps them up in clouds and thick darkness; by that means to deter inquisitive man (as he did at *Sinai*) from breaking into the mount, *Ex.* 20. And that he gives any intimation at all of such, seems design'd only to give us a just estimate how shallow our comprehensions are; and excite us to adore and admire that Abyss of divine Wisdom which we can never fathom.

10. THINGS of a middle nature, which may be useful to some, but are not indispensibly necessary to all, the Scripture leaves more accessible; yet not so obvious as to be within every mans reach: but makes them only the prize of industry, praier, and humble endeavors. And it is no small benefit, that those who cover the knowledg of divine Truth, are by it engag'd to take these vertues in the way. Besides there is so much time requir'd to that study, as renders it inconsistent with those secular businesses wherein the generality of men are immerst: and consequently 'tis necessary that those who addict themselves to the one, have competent vacancy from the other: And in this it hath a visible use by being very contributive to the maintaining that spiritual subordination of the people

people to the Pastors; which God has establish'd. *Miriam* and *Corahs* Partisans are a pregnant instance how much the opinion of equal knowledg unfits for subjection: and we see by sad experience how much the bare pretence of it has disturb'd the Church, and made those turn preachers who never were understanding hearers.

11. But besides these more abstruse, there are easier truths in which every man is concern'd; the explicit knowledg whereof is necessary to all; I mean the divine Rules for saving Faith and Manners. And in those the Scripture stile is as plain as is possible: condescends to the apprehensions of the rudest capacities: so that none that can read the Scripture but will there find the way to blifs evidently chalk'd out to him. That I may use the words of Saint Gregory, *the Lamb may wade in those waters of life, as well as the Elephant may swim. The Holy Ghost, as St. Austin tells us, lib. 2. of Christian doctrine, chap. 6. has made in the plainer places of Scripture magnificent and healthful provision for our hunger; and in the obscure, against satiety. For there are scarce any things drawn from obscure places, which in others are not spoken most plainly* And he farther adds, *that if any thing happen to be nowhere explain'd, every man may there abound in his sense.*

12. So again, in the same Book, cap. 9.  
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he saies, *that all those things which concern Faith and Manners, are plainly to be met with in the Scripture: and Saint Jerom in his Comment on Es. 19. tells us, that 'tis the custom of the Scripture to close obscure sayings with those that are easy; and what was first exprest darkly, to propose in evident words: which very thing is said likewise by Saint Chrysostom, Hom. 9. 2 Cor. 4. 11. who in his first homily on Saint Mat. farther declares, that the Scriptures are easy to be understood, and expos'd to vulgar capacities.*

13. He saies again, Hom. upon *Esay*, *that the Scriptures are not mettals that require the help of Miners, but afford a trefure easily to be had to them that seek the riches contain'd in them. It is enough only to stoop down, and look upon them, and depart replenish'd with wealth; it is enough only to open them, and behold the splendor of those Gems. Again, Hom. 3. on the second Ep. to the Theff. 2. All things are evident and strait, which are in the holy Scripture; whatever is necessary is manifest. So also Hom. 3. on Gen. 14. It cannot be that he who is studious in the holy Scripture should be rejected: for tho the instruction of men be wanting, the Lord from above will inlighten our minds, shine in upon our reason, revele what is secret, and teach what we do not know. So Hom. 1. on Jo. 11. Almighty God involves his doctrine with no mists, and darknes, as did the Philosophers: his doctrine*

*Strin is brighter then the Sun-beams, and more illustrious; and therefore every where diffus'd: and Hom. 6. on Jo. 11. His doctrine is so facile; that not only the wise, but even women, and youths must comprehend it. Hom. 13. on Gen. 2. Let us go to the Scripture as our Mark, which is its own interpreter. And soon after saies, that the Scripture interprets it self; and suffers not its Auditor to err. To the same purpose saies Cyril in his third Book against Julian. In the Scripture nothing is difficult to them, who are conversant in them as they ought to be.*

14. IT is therefore a groundless cavil which men make at the obscurity of the Scripture; since it is not obscure in those things wherein 'tis our common interest it should be plain: which sufficiently justifies its propriety to that great end of *making us wise unto salvation.* And for those things which seem less intelligible to us, many of them become so, not by the innate obscurity of the Text; but by extrinsic circumstances (of which perhaps the over-busy tampering of Paraphrasts, pleased with new notions of their own, may be reckon'd for one.) But this subject the Reader may find so well pursued in Mr. *Boyls* Tract concerning the stile of Scripture, that I shall be kindest both to him and it to refer him thither; as also for answer to those other querulous objections which men galled with the sense of the Scripture, have made to its stile.

15. A third circumstance in which the Scripture is fitted to attain its end, is its being committed to writing, as that is distinguish'd from oral delivery. It is most true, the word of God is of equal authority and efficacy which way soever it be deliver'd: The Sermons of the Apostles were every jot as divine and powerful out of their mouths, as they are now in their story. All the advantage therefore that the written Word can pretend to, is in order to its perpetuity, as it is a securer way of derivation to posterity, than that of oral Tradition. To evince that it is so, I shall first weigh the rational probabilities on either side. Secondly; I shall consider to which God himself appears in Scripture to give the preference.

16. FOR the first of these, I shall propose this consideration, which I had occasion to intimate before, that the Bible being writ for the universal use of the faithful, 'twas as universally dispers'd amongst them: The Jews had the Law not only in their Synagogues, but in their privat houses; and as soon as the Evangelical Books were writ, they were scatter'd into all places where the Christian Faith had obtain'd. Now when there was such a vast multitude of copies, and those so revered by the possessors, that they thought it the highest pitch of sacrilege to expose them, it must surely be next to impossible, entirely to

suppress that Book. Besides, it could never be attempted but by some eminent violence as it was by the heathen Persecutors; which (according to the common effect of opposition) serv'd to enhance the Christians value of the Bible; and consequently when the storm was past, to excite their diligence for recruiting the number. So that, unless in after Ages, all the Christians in the world should at once make a voluntary defection, and conspire to eradicate their Religion, the Scripture could not be utterly extinguish'd.

17. AND that which secures it from total suppression, do's in a great degree do so from corruption and falsification. For whilst so many genuine copies are extant in all parts of the world, to be appeal'd to, it would be a very difficult matter to impose a spurious one; especially if the change were so material as to awaken mens jealousies. And it must be only in a place and age of gross ignorance, that any can be daring enough to attempt it. And if it should happen to succeed in such a particular Church, yet what is that to the universal? And to think to have the forgery admitted there, is (as a learned man saies) like attempting to poison the sea.

18. ON the other side, oral Tradition seems much more liable to hazards, error may there insinuate it self much more insensibly. And tho there be no universal conspiracy

racy to admit it at first; yet like a small eruption of waters, it widens its own passage, till it cause an inundation. There is no impression so deep, but time and intervening accidents may wear out of mens minds; especially where the notions are many and are founded not in nature, but positive institution, as a great part of Christian Religion is. And when we consider the various tempers of men, 'twill not be strange that succeeding Ages will not alwaies be determin'd by the Traditions of the former. Som are pragmatic, and think themselves fitter to prescribe to the belief of their posterity, then to follow that of their Ancestors: som have interest and designs which will be better serv'd by new Tenets: and som are ignorant and mistaking, and may unawares corrupt the doctrin they should barely deliver: and of this last sort we may guess there may be many, since it falls commonly to the mothers lot to imbue children with the first rudiments.

19. Now in all these cases how possible is it that primitive Tradition may be either lost or adulterated? and consequently, and in proportion to that possibility, our confidence of it must be stagger'd. I am sure according to the common estimate in seculars it must be so. For I appeal to any man whether he be not apter to credit a relation which

comes from an eye-witness then at the third or fourth, much more at the hundredth rebound : (as in this case.) And daily experience tells us ; that a true and probable story by passing thro many hands , often grows to an improbable lie. This man thinks he could add one becoming circumstance ; that man another : and whilst most men take the liberty to do so , the relation grows as monstrous as such a heap of incoherent phancies can make it.

20. IF to this it be said that this happens only in trivial secular matters , but that in the weighty concern of Religion mankind is certainly more serious and sincere : I answer that 'tis very improbable that they are ; since 'tis obvious in the common practice of the world, that the interests of Religion are postpon'd to every little worldly concern. And therefore when a temporal advantage requires the bending and warping of Religion , there will never be wanting some that will attempt it.

21. BESIDES, there is still left in human nature so much of the venom of the Serpents first temptation, that tho men cannot be as God, yet they love to be prescribing to him , and to be their own Assessors as to that worship and homage they are to pay him.

22. BUT above all 'tis considerable that  
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in this case Sathan has a more peculiar concern; and can serve himself more by a falsification here than in temporal affairs. For if he can but corrupt Religion, it ceases to be his enemy; and becomes one of his most useful engins, as sufficiently appear'd in the rites of the heathen worship. We have therefore no cause to think this an exempt case; but to presume it may be influenc'd by the same pravity of human nature, which prevails in others; and consequently are oblig'd to bless God that he has not left our spiritual concerns to such hazards, but has lodg'd them in a more secure repository, the written Word.

23. BUT I fore-see 'twill be objected, that whilst I thus disparage Tradition, I do virtually invalidate the Scripture it self, which comes to us upon its credit. To this I answer first that since God has with-drawn immediate revelation from the world, Tradition is the only means to convey to us the first notice that this Book is the word of God: and it, being the only means he affords, we have all reason to depend on his goodness, that he will not suffer that to be evacuated to us: and that how liable soever Tradition may be to err, yet that it shall not actually err in this particular.

24. BUT in the second place; This Tradition seems not so liable to falsification as others

thers: It is so very short and simple a proposition; such and such writings are the word of God, that there is no great room for Sophistry or mistake to pervert the sense; the only possible deception must be to change the subject, and obtrude suppositious writings in room of the true, under the title of the word of God. But this has already appear'd to be unpracticable, because of the multitude of copies which were dispers'd in the world; by which such an attempt would soon have bin detected. There appears therefore more reason as well as more necessity, to rely upon Tradition in this; then in most other particulars.

25. NEITHER yet do I so farr decry oral Tradition in any, as to conclude it impossible it should derive any truth to posterity: I only look on it as more casual; and consequently a less fit conveyance of the most important and necessary verities then the written Word: In which I conceive my self justifi'd by the common sense of mankind; who use to commit those things to writing, which they are most solicitous to derive to posterity: Do's any Nation trust their fundamental Laws only to the memory of the present Age; and take no other course to transmit them to the future? do's any man purchase an estate, and leave no way for his children to lay claim to it, but the Tradition the present witnesses shall leave of it? Nay do's any considering



sidering man ordinarily make any important pact or bargain (tho without relation to posterity) without putting the Articles in writing? And whence is all this caution but from a universal consent that writing is the surest way of transmitting?

26. BUT we have yet a higher appeal in this matter then to the suffrage of men: God himself seems to have determin'd it; And what his decision is, 'tis our next business to inquire.

27. AND first he has given the most real and comprehensive attestation to this way of writing, by having himself chose it. For he is too wise to be mistaken in his estimate of better and worse, and too kind to chuse the worst for us: and yet he has chosen to communicate himself to the latter Ages of the world by writing; and has summ'd up all the Eternal concerns of mankind in the sacred Scriptures, and left those sacred Records by which we are to be both inform'd and govern'd; which if oral Tradition would infallibly have don, had bin utterly needless: and God sure is not so prodigal of his spirit, as to inspire the Authors of Scripture to write that, whose use was superseded by a former more certain expedient.

28. NAY, under the Mosaic œconomy, when he made use of other waies of reveling himself, yet to perpetuate the memory even  
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of those Revelations, he chose to have them written, At the delivery of the Law, God spake then *viva voce*, and with that pomp of dreadful solemnity, as certainly was apt to make the deepest impressions; yet God fore-saw that thro every succeeding Age that stamp would grow more dim, and in a long revolution might at last be extinct. And therefore how warm soever the Israelites apprehensions then were; he would not trust to them for the perpetuating his Law, but committed it to writing; *Ex. 13. 18.* nay wrote it twice himself.

29. YET farther even the ceremonial Law, tho not intended to be of perpetual obligation, was not yet referr'd to the traditional way, but was wrote by *Moses*, and deposited with the Priests, *Deut. 31. 9.* And after-  
 event shew'd this was no needless caution. For when under *Manasses*, Idolatry had prevail'd in *Jerusalem*, it was not by any dormant Tradition; but by the Book of the Law found in the Temple, that *Josiah* was both excited to reform Religion, and instructed how to do it; *2 Kings 22. 10.* And had not that or som other copy bin produc'd, they had bin much in the dark as to the particulars of their reformation; which that they had not bin convey'd by Tradition, appears by the sudden startling of the King upon the reading of the Law; which could not have bin, had

had he bin before possess'd with the contents of it. In like manner we find in *Nehemiah*, that the observation of the Feast of Tabernacles was recover'd by consulting the Law; the Tradition whereof was wholly worn out; or else it had sure bin impossible that it could for so long a time have bin intermitted, *Neb.* 8. 18. And yet mens memories are commonly more retentive of an external visible rite, then they are of speculative Propositions, or moral Precepts.

30. THESE instances shew how fallible an expedient mere oral Tradition is for transmission to posterity. But admit no such instance could be given, 'tis argument enough that God has by his own choice of writing, given the preference to it. Nor has he barely chosen it, but has made it the standard by which to measure all succeeding pretences. 'Tis the means he prescribes for distinguishing divine from diabolical Inspirations: *To the Law and to the Testimony: if they speak not according to this Word, there is no light in them,* *Isai.* 8. 20. And when the Lawier interrogated our Savior what he should do to inherit eternal life, he sends him not to ransack Tradition, or the cabalistical divinity of the Rabbins, but refers him to the Law: *What is written in the Law? how readest thou?* *Luk.* 10. 26. And indeed, throout the Gospel, we still find him in his discourse appealing to

Scripture, and asserting its authority: as on the other side inveighing against those Traditions of the Elders which had evacuated the written Word: *Ye make the Word of God of none effect by your Tradition*; Mat. 15. 6. Which as it abundantly shews Christs adherence to the written Word, so 'tis a pregnant instance how possible it is for Tradition to be corrupted, and made the instrument of imposing mens phancies even in contradiction to Gods commands.

31. AND since our blessed Lord has made Scripture the test whereby to try Traditions, we may surely acquiesce in his decision, and either embrace or reject Traditions, according as they correspond to the supreme rule, the written Word. It must therefore be a very unwarrantable attempt to set up Tradition in competition with (much more in contradiction to) that to which Christ himself hath subjected it.

32. Saint *Paul* reckons it as the principal privilege of the Jewish Church, that it had the Oracles of God committed to it; i. e. that the holy Scriptures were deposited, and put in its custody: and in this the Christian Church succeeds it, and is the guardian and conservator of holy Writ. Ask then, had the Jewish Church by virtue of its being keeper, a power to supersede any part of those Oracles intrusted to them? if so, Saint *Paul* was  
much

much out in his estimate, and ought to have reckon'd that as their highest privilege. But indeed, the very nature of the trust implies the contrary; and besides, 'tis evident, that is the very crime Christ charges upon the Jews in the place above cited. And if the Jewish Church had no such right, upon what account can the Christian claim any? Has Christ enlarg'd its Charter? has he left the sacred Scriptures with her, not to preserve and practice, but to regulate and reform? to fill up its vacancies, and supply its defects by her own Traditions? if so, let the commission be produc'd; but if her office be only that of guardianship and trust, she must neither subtract from, nor by any superadditions of her own evacuate its meaning and efficacy: and to do so, would be the same guilt that it would be in a person intrusted with the fundamental Records of a Nation, to foist in such clauses as himself pleases.

33 IN short, God has in the Scriptures laid down exact rules for our belief and practice, and has entrusted the Church to convey them to us: if she vary, or any way enervate them, she is false to that trust, but cannot by it oblige us to recede from that rule she should deliver, to comply with that she obtrudes upon us. The case may be illustrated by an easy resemblance. Suppose a King have a foreign principality for which he composes

a body of Laws; annexes to them rewards and penalties, and requires an exact and indispensable conformity to them. These being put in writing, he sends by a select messenger: now suppose this messenger deliver them, yet saies withall, that himself has authority from the King to supersede these Laws at his pleasure; so that their last resort must be to his dictates, yet produces no other testimony but his own bare affirmation. Is it possible that any men in their wits should be so stupidly credulous, as to incur the penalty of those Laws upon so improbable an indemnity? And sure it would be no whit less madness in Christians, to violate any precept of God, on an ungrounded supposal of the Churches power to dispense with them.

34. AND if the Church universal have not this power, nor indeed ever claim'd it, it must be a strange insolence for any particular Church to pretend to it, as the Church of *Rome* do's; as if we should owe to her Tradition all our Scripture, and all our Faith; insomuch that without the supplies which she affords from the Oracle of her Chair, our Religion were imperfect, and our salvation insecure. Upon which wild dictates I shall take liberty in a distinct Section, farther to animadvert.

## S E C T. VI.

*The suffrage of the primitive Christian Church, concerning the propriety and fitness which the Scripture has towards the attainment of its excellent end.*

**A** GAINST what has bin hitherto said to the advantage of the holy Scripture, there opposes it self (as we have already intimated) the authority of the Church of *Rome*; which allows it to be only an imperfect rule of Faith, saying in the fourth Session of the Council of *Trent*, that *Christian faith and discipline, are contain'd in the Books written, and unwritten Tradition.* And in the fourth rule of the Index put forth by command of the said Council, *the Scripture* is declar'd to be *so far from useful, that its reading is pernicious if permitted promiscuously in the vulgar Tongue*, and therefore to be withheld: insomuch that the study of the holy Bible is commonly by persons of the Roman Communion, imputed to Protestants as part of their heresy; they being call'd by them in contemt the Evangelical men, and Scripturarians. And the Bible in the vulgar Tongue of any Nation, is commonly reckon'd among prohibited Books, and as such, publicly burnt  
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when met with by the Inquisitors: and the person who is found with it, or to read therein, is subjected to severe penalties.

2. FOR the vindication of the truth of God, and to put to shame those unhappy Innovators, who amidst great pretences to antiquity, and veneration to the Scriptures, prevaricat from both: I think it may not be amiss, to shew plainly the mind of the primitive Church herein; and that in as few words as the matter will admit.

3. FIRST I premise that *Ireneus* and *Tertullian* having to do with Heretics, who boasted themselves to be emendators of the Apostles, and wiser then they; despising their authority, rejecting several parts of the Scripture, and obtruding other writings in their stead, have had recourse unto Tradition, with a seeming preference of it unto Scripture. Their adversaries having no common principle besides the owning the name of Christians; it was impossible to convince them, but by a recourse to such a medium which they would allow. But these Fathers being to set down and establish their Faith, are most expresse in resolving it into Scripture: and when they recommend Tradition, ever mean such as is also Apostolical.

4. IRENEUS in the second Book, 47. c. tells us, *that the Scriptures are perfect, as dictated by the word of God and his spirit.* And the same



same Father begins his third Book in this manner, *The disposition of our salvation is no otherwise known by us, then by those by whom the Gospel was brought to us; which indeed they first preach'd, but afterward deliver'd it to us in the Scripture, to be the foundation and pillar of our Faith. Nor may we imagin, that they began to preach to others, before they themselves had perfect knowledg, as som are bold to say; boasting themselves to be emendators of the Apostles. For after our Lords Resurrection, they were indued with the power of the holy Spirit from on high; and having perfect knowledg, went forth to the ends of the earth, preaching the glad tidings of salvation, and celestial praise unto men. Each and all of whom had the Gospel of God. So Saint Matthew wrote the Gospel to the Hebrews, in their tongue. Saint Peter and Saint Paul preach'd at Rome, and there founded a Church: Mark the Disciple and interpreter of Peter, deliver'd in writing what he had preach'd, and Luke the follower of Paul set down in his Book the Gospel he had deliver'd. Afterward Saint John at Ephesus in Asia publish'd his Gospel. &c. In his fourth Book, c. 66. he directs all the Heretics with whom he deals, to read diligently the Gospel deliver'd by the Apostles, and also read diligently the Prophets, assuring they shall there find every action, every doctrine, and every suffering of our Lord declared by them.*

5. THUS

5. *Thus Tertullian in his Book of Prescriptions, c. 6. It is not lawful for us to introduce any thing of our own will, nor make any choice upon our arbitrement. We have the Apostles of our Lord for our Authors, who themselves took up nothing on their own will or choice; but faithfully imparted to the Nations the discipline which they had receiv'd from Christ. So that if an Angel from heaven should teach another doctrine, he were to be accurst. And. c. 25. 'Tis madness, saies he of the Heretics, when they confess that the Apostles were ignorant of nothing, nor taught things different; to think that they did not revele all things to all: which he enforces in the following chapter. In his Book against Hermogenes, c. 23. he discourses thus; I adore the plenitude of the Scripture, which discovers to me the Creator, and what was created. Also in the Gospel I find the Word was the Arbiter and Agent in the Creation. That all things were made of preexistent matter I never read. Let Hermogenes, and his journey-men shew that it is written. If it be not written, let him fear the woe, which belongs to them that add or detract. And in the 39. ch. of his Prescript. We feed our faith, raise our hope, and establish our reliance with the sacred Words.*

6. *In like manner Hippolytus in the Homily against Noetus declares, that we acknowledge only from Scripture that there is one God. And whereas secular Philosophy is not to be had,*  
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but from the reading of the doctrine of the Philosophers; so whosoever of us will preserve piety towards God, he cannot otherwise learn it then from the holy Scripture. Accordingly Origen in the fifth Homily on *Leviticus*, saies, in the Scripture every word appertaining to God, is to be sought and discust; and the knowledg of all things is to be receiv'd.

7. WHAT Saint Cyprian's opinion was in this point, we learn at large from his Epistle to Pompey. For when Tradition was objected to him, he answers; *Whence is this Tradition? is it from the authority of our Lord and his Gospel; or comes it from the commands of the Apostles in their Epistles? Almighty God declares that what is written should be obey'd and practis'd. The Book of the Law, saies he in Joshua, shall not depart from thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate in it day and night, that you may observe and keep all that is written therein. So our Lord sending his Apostles, commands them to baptize all Nations, and teach them to observe all things that he had commanded. Again, what obstinacy and presumption is it to prefer human Tradition to divine Command: not considering that Gods wrath is kindled as often as his Precepts are dissolv'd and neglected by reason of human Traditions. Thus God warns and speaks by Isaiah: This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; but in vain do they worship me,*  
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*teaching for doctrins the commandments of men. Also the Lord in the Gospel checks and reproveth, saying; you reject the Law of God, that you may establish your Tradition. Of which Precept the Apostle Saint Paul being mindful, admonishes and instructs, saying; If any man teaches otherwise, and hearkens not to sound doctrine, and the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, he is proud, knowing nothing: From such we must depart. And again he adds, There is a compendious way for religious and sincere minds, both to deposit their errors, and find out the truth. For if we return to the source and original of divine Tradition, human error will cease, and the ground of heavenly Mysteries being seen, whatsoever was hid with clouds and darkness, will be manifest by the light of truth. If a pipe that brought plentiful supplies of water, fail on the suddain, do not men look to the fountain, and thence learn the cause of the defect, whether the spring it self be dry; or if running freely, the water is stopt in its passage; that if by interrupted or broken conveyances, it was hindered to pass, they being repair'd, it may again be brought to the City, with the same plenty as it flows from the spring? And this Gods Priests ought to do at this time, obeying the commands of God, that if truth have swerv'd or fail'd in any particular, we go backward to the source of the Evangelical and Apostolical Tradition, and there found our actings; from whence their order and origination began.*

8. IT is true *Bellarmino* reproches this discourse as erroneous; but whatever it might be in the inference which *Saint Cyprian* drew from it, in it self it was not so. For *Saint Austin*, tho sufficiently engag'd against *Saint Cyprian's* conclusion, allows the position as most Orthodox; saying, in the fourth Book of Baptism, c. 35. *Whereas he admonishes to go back to the fountain, that is, the Tradition of the Apostles, and thence bring the stream down to our times; 'tis most excellent, and without doubt to be don.*

9. THUS *Eusebius* expresses himself in his second Book against *Sabellius*. *As it is a point of sloth, not to seek into those things, whereof one may enquire; so 'tis insolence to be inquisitive in others. But what are those things which we ought to enquire into? Even those which are to be found in the Scriptures: those things which are not there to be found, let us not seek after. For if they ought to be known, the holy Ghost had not omitted them in the Scripture.*

10. ATHANASIUS in his Tract of the Incarnation, saies, *It is fit for us to adhere to the word of God, and not relinquish it, thinking by syllogisms to evade, what is there clearly deliver'd.* Again in his Tract to *Serap.* of the holy Ghost; *Ask not, saies he, concerning the Trinity, but learn only from the Scriptures. For the instructions which you will find there, are sufficient.* And in his Oration against the Gen-

tiles, declares, *That the Scriptures are sufficient to the manifestation of the truth.*

II. AGREEABLE to these is *Optatus* in his 5. Book against *Parmen.* who reasons thus, *You say'tis lawful to rebaptize, we say'tis not lawful: betwixt your saying and our gain-saying the peoples minds are amus'd. Let no man believe either you or us. All men are apt to be contentious. Therefore Judges are to be call'd in. Christians they cannot be; for they will be parties; and thereby partial. Therefore a Judge is to be lookt out from abroad. If a Pagan, he knows not the mysteries of our Religion. If a Jew, he is an enemy to our baptism. There is therefore no earthly Judge; but one is to be sought from heaven. Yet there is no need of a resort to heaven, when we have in the Gospel a Testament: and in this case, celestial things may be compar'd to earthly. So it is as with a Father who has many children; while he is present he orders them all, and there is no need of a written Will: Accordingly Christ when he was present upon earth, from time to time commanded the Apostles whatsoever was necessary. But as the earthly father finding himself to be at the point of death, and fearing that after his departure his children should quarrell among themselves, he calls witnesses, and puts his mind in writing; and if any difference arise among the brethren, they go not to their Fathers Sepulcher, but repair to his Will and Testament; and he who rests in his grave,*

grave, speaks still in his writing, as if he were alive. Our Lord who left his Will among us, is now in heaven, therefore let us seek his commands in the Gospel, as in his Will.

12. THUS Cyril of Ieruf. Cat. 4. Nothing, no not the least concernment of the divine and holy Sacraments of our Faith, is to be deliver'd without the holy Scripture: believe not me unless I give you a demonstration of what I say from the Scripture.

13. SAINT Basil in his Book of the true Faith saies, If God be faithful in all his sayings, his words, and works, they remaining for ever, and being don in truth and equity; it must be an evident sign of infidelity and pride, if any one shall reject what is written, and introduce what is not written. In which Books he generally declares that he will write nothing but what he receives from the holy Scripture: and that he abhors from taking it elsewhere. In his 29. Homily against the Antitrinit. Believe, saies he, those which are written; seek not those which are not written. And in his Eth. reg. 26. Every word and action ought to be confirm'd by the testimony of the divinely inspir'd Scriptures to the establishment of the Faith of the good, and reproof of the wicked.

14. SAINT Ambrose in the first Book of his Offic. saies: How can we make use of anything which is not to be found in Scripture? And in his Instit. of Virgins. I read he is the first, but  
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*read not he is the second ; let them who say he is second , shew it from the reading.*

15. GREG. Nyssen in his Dial. of the soul and resurrect. saies. *'Tis undeniable, that truth is there only to be plac'd , where there is the seal of Scripture Testimony.*

16. SAINT Jerom against Helvidius declares. *As we deny not that which is written , so we refuse those which are not written.* And in his Comment on the 98. Ps. *Every thing that we assert , we must shew from the holy Scripture. The word of him that speaks has not that authority as Gods precept.* And on the 87. Ps. *Whatever is said after the Apostles , let it be cut off , nor have afterwards authority. The one be holy after the Apostles , the one be eloquent ; yet has he not authority.*

17. SAINT Austin in his Tract of the unity of the Church , c. 12. *acknowledges that he could not be convinc'd but by the Scriptures of what he was to believe ; and adds they are read with such manifestation , that he who believes them , must confess the doctrine to be most true.* In the second Book of Christian doctrine , c. 9. he saies , *that in the plain places of Scripture are found all those things that concern Faith and Manners.* And in Epist. 42. *All things which have bin exhibited heretofore as don to mankind , and what we now see and deliver to our posterity , the Scripture has not past them in silence , so far forth as they concern*  
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*the search or defence of our Religion. In his Tract of the good of Widowhood, he saies to Julian, the person to whom he addresses: What shall I teach you more then that we read in the Apostle: for the holy Scripture settles the rule of our doctrin; that we think not any thing more then we ought to think; but to think soberly, as God has dealt to every man the measure of Faith. Therefore my teaching is only to expound the words of this Doctor, Ep. 157. Where any subject is obscure, and passes our comprehension, and the Scripture do's not plainly afford its help, there human conjecture is presumptuous in defining.*

18. THEOPHILUS of Alex. in his second Paschal homily, tells us, that 'tis the suggestion of a diabolical spirit to think that any thing besides the Scripture has divine authority. And in his third he adds, that the Doctors of the Church having the Testimony of the Scripture, lay firm foundation of their doctrin.

19. CHRYSOSTOM in his third Homily on the first of the Thessal. asserts, that from the alone reading or hearing of the Scripture one may learn all things necessary. So Hom. 34. on Act. 15. he declares. *A heathen comes and saies: I would willingly be a Christian, but I know not who to join my self to; for there are many contentions among you, many seditions and tumults; so that I am in doubt what opinion I should chuse. Each man saies, what y say is true,*

*true, and I know not whom to believe; each pretends to Scripture which I am ignorant of. 'Tis very well the issue is put here: for if the appeal were to reason, in this case there would be just occasion of being troubled: but when we appeal to Scripture, and they are simple and certain, you may easily your self judg. He that agrees with the Scripture is a Christian, he that resists them, is far out of the way. And on Ps. 95. If any thing be said without the Scripture, the mind halts between different opinions; sometimes inclining as to what is probable, anon rejecting as what is frivolous: but when the testimony of holy Scripture is produc'd, the mind both of speaker and hearer is confirm'd. And Hom. 4. on Lazar. Tho one should rise from the dead, or an Angel come down from heaven, we must believe the Scripture; they being fram'd by the Lord of Angels, and the quick and dead. And Hom. 13. 2 Cor. 7. It is not an absurd thing that when we deal with men about money, we wil trust no body, but cast up the sum, and make use of our counters; but in religious affairs; suffer our selves to be led aside by other mens opinions, even then when we have by an exact scale and touchstone, the dictat of the divine Law. Therefore I pray and exhort you, that giving no heed to what this or that man saies, you would consult the holy Scripture, and thence learn the divine riches, and pursue what you have learnt. And Hom. 58. on Jo. 10. 1. 'Tis the mark of a thief, that*

that he comes not in by the dore, but another way: now by the dore the testimony of the Scripture is signified. And Hom. on Gal. 1. 8. The Apostle saies not, if any man teach a contrary doctrine let him be accurs'd, or if he subvert the whole Gospel; but if he teach any thing beside the Gospel which you have receiv'd, or vary any little thing, let him be accurs'd.

20. CYRIL of Alex. against Jul. l. 7. saies, The holy Scripture is sufficient to make them who are instructed in it, wise unto salvation, and endued with most ample knowledg.

21. THEODORET Dial. 1. I am perswaded only by the holy Scripture. And Dial. 2. I am not so bold to affirm any thing, not spoken of in the Scripture. And again, qu. 45. upon Genes. We ought not to enquire after what is past over in silence, but acquiesce in what is written.

22. IT were easy to enlarge this discourse into a Volume; but having taken, as they offer'd themselves, the suffrages of the writers of the four first Centuries, I shall not proceed to those that follow. If the holy Scripture were a perfect rule of Faith and Manners to all Christians heretofore, we may reasonably assure our selves it is so still; and will now guide us into all necessary truth, and consequently make us wise unto salvation, without the aid of oral Tradition, or the new mintage of a living infallible Judg of controversy. And the

impartial Reader will be enabled to judge whether our appeal to the holy Scripture, in all occasions of controversy, and recommendation of it to the study of every Christian, be that heresy and innovation which it is said to be.

23. IT is, we know, severely imputed to the Scribes and Pharisees by our Savior, that they took from the people *the key of knowledge*, Luk. 11. 52. and had *made the word of God of none effect by their Traditions*, Matt. 15. 6. but they never attempted what has bin since practiced by their Successors in the Western Church, to take away the Ark of the Testament it self, and cut of not only the efficacy, but very possession of the word of God by their Traditions. Surely this had bin exceeding criminal from any hand: but that the Bishops and Governors of the Church, and the universal and infallible Pastor of it, who claim the office to interpret the Scriptures, exhort unto, and assist in the knowledge of them, should be the men who thus rob the people of them; carries with it the highest aggravations both of cruelty and breach of trust. *If any man shall take away from the words of the Book of this prophecy, saies Saint John, Revel. 22. 19. God shall take away his part out of the Book of Life, and out of the holy City, and from the things which*

*which are written in this Book.* What vengeance therefore awaits those, who have taken away not only from one Book, but at once the Books themselves, even all the Scriptures, the whole word of God?

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## S E C T. VII.

*Historical reflections upon the events which have happen'd in the Church since the with-drawing of the holy Scripture.*

**T**WILL in this place be no useless contemplation to observe, after the Scriptures had bin raviſht from the people in the Church of *Rome*, what pitiful pretenders were admitted to ſucceed. And firſt becauſe Lay-men were preſum'd to be illiterate, and eaſily ſeducible by thoſe writings which were in themſelves difficult, and would be wreſted by the *unlearned to their own deſtruction*; pictures were recommended in their ſteed, and complemented as the Books of the Laity, which ſoon improv'd into a neceſſity of their worſhip, and that groſs ſuperſtition which renders Chriſtianity abominated by Turks, and Jews, and Heathens unto this day.

2. I would not be haſty in charging Idolatry upon the Church of *Rome*, or all in her communion; but that their Image-worſhip is a moſt fatal ſnare, in which vaſt numbers of unhappy ſouls are taken, no man can doubt who hath with any regard travail'd in Popiſh Countries. I my ſelf, and thouſands of others,  
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whom the late troubles, or other occasions sent abroad, are and have bin witnesses thereof. Charity, 'tis true, believes all things, but it do's not oblige men to disbelieve their eies. 'Twas the out-cry of *Micah* against the Danites; *Jud.* 18. 24. *ye have taken away my Gods which I have made, and the Priest, and are gon away, and what have I more?* but the Laity of the Roman communion may enlarge the complaint, and say; you have taken away the oracles of our God, and set up every where among us graven and molten Images, and Teraphims, and what have we more? and 'twas lately the loud, and I doubt me is still, the unanswerable complaint of the poor Americans, that they were deni'd to worship their Pagod once in the year, when they who forbad them, worship'd theirs every day.

3. THE Jews before the captivity, notwithstanding the recent memory of the Miracles in Egypt and the Wilderness, and the first conquest of the Land of *Canaan* with those that succeeded under the Judges and kings of *Israel* and *Juda*; as also the express command of God, and the menaces of Prophets, ever and anon fell to downright Idolatry: but after their return unto this day, have kept themselves from falling into that sin, tho' they had no Prophets to instruct them, no miracles or government to encourage or constrain them. The reason of which a very  
learned

learned man in his discourse of religious Assemblies takes to be, the reading and teaching of the Law in their Synagogues ; which was perform'd with great exactness after the return from the captivity, but was not so perform'd before. And may we not invert the observation, and impute the Image-worship now set up in the Christian Church, to the forbidding the reading of the Scriptures in the Churches, and interdicting the private use, and institution in them ?

4. FOR a farther supplement in place of the Scriptures, whose History was thought not edifying enough, the Legends of the Saints were introduc'd ; stories so stupid, that one would imagin them design'd as an experiment how far credulity could be impos'd upon ; or else fram'd to a worse intent, that Christianity by them might be made ridiculous. Yet these are recommended to use and veneration, while in the mean time the word of God is utterly forbidden, whereby the parties to this unhappy practice ( that I may speak in the words of the Prophet *Jerem. 2. 13.* ) *have committed two evils, they have forsaken the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water.*

5. FARTHER yet, the same unreasonable tyranny which permitted not the Laity to understand Almighty God speaking to them in the



the Scripture; hinder'd them from being suffer'd to understand the Church or themselves speaking to him in their prayers; whilst the whole Roman office is so dispos'd, that in defiance of the Apostles discourse, *1 Cor. 14. he that occupies the room of the unlearned must say amen, to those prayers and praises which he has no comprehension of:* and by his endless repetitions of Paters, Ave's and Credo's, falls into that battology reprov'd by our Savior, *Mat. 6. 7.* and as 'twas said to the woman of *Samaria, Jo. 4. 22. knows not what he worships.* Yet this unaccountable practice is so much the darling of that Church, that when in *France* about eighteen years since, the Roman Missal was translated into the vulgar Tongue, and publish'd by the direction of several of their Bishops; the Clergy of *France* rose up in great fury against the attempt, anathematizing in their circular Epistles, *all that sold, read, or us'd the said Book:* and upon complaint unto Pope *Alex. the 7.* he resented the matter so deeply, as to issue out his Bull against it in the following words.

6. WHEREAS *sons of perdition, endeavoring the destruction of souls, have translated the Roman Missal into the French Tongue, and so attempted to throw down and trample upon the majesty of the holy Rites comprehended in Latin words: As we abominate and detest the novelty, which will deform the beauty of the Church, and produce*  
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*disobediente, temerity, boldness, sedition and schism; so we condemn, reprobate and forbid, the said and all other such Translations, and interdict the reading, and keeping, to all and singular the faithful, of whatever sex, degree, order, condition, dignity, honor, or preeminence, &c. under pain of excommunication. And we command the copies to be immediatly burnt, &c.* So mortal a sin it seems 'twas tought for the Laity to understand the praiers in which they must communicate.

7. N O R is this all; agreeable to the other attemts upon the holy Scripture, was the bold insolence of making a new authentic Text, in that unknown Tongue in which the offices of praier had bin, and were to be kept disguis'd; which was don by the decree of the Council of *Trent* in the fourth Session. But when the Council had given this Prerogative to the Version which it call'd vulgar, the succeeding Popes began to consider what that Version was; and this work *Pius* the fourth and fifth set upon, but prevented by death fail'd to complete it, so that the honor of the performance fell to *Sixtus* the fifth, who in the plenitude of his Apostolic power (the Translation being reform'd to his mind) commanded it to be that genuine ancient Edition, which the *Trent* Fathers had before made authentic, and under the pain of excommunication requir'd it to be so received: which he do's in this  
form.

form. Of our certain knowledg, and the plenitude of Apostolic power, we order and declare that vulgar Edition which has bin receiv'd for authentic by the Council of Trent, is without doubt or controversy to be esteem'd this very one, which being amended as well as it is possible, and printed at the Vatican Press; we publish to be read in the whole Christian Republic, and in all Churches of the Christian world. Decreeing that it having bin approv'd by the consent of the holy universal Church, and the holy Fathers, and then by the Decree of the general Council of Trent; and now by the Apostolic authority deliver'd to us by the Lord; is the true, legitimate, authentic, and undoubted, which is to be received and held in all public and privat Disputations, Lectures, Preachings, and Expositions, &c. But notwithstanding this certain knowledg, and plenitude of Apostolic power, soon after came Clement the eighth, and again resumes the work of his Predecessor *Sixtus*; discovers great and many errors in it, and puts out one more reform'd, yet confest by himself to be imperfect; which now stands for the authentic Text, and carries the title of the Bible put forth by *Sixtus*; notwithstanding all its alterations. So well do's the Roman Church deserve the honor which she pretends to, of being the *mistress of all Churches*; and so infallible is the holy Chair in its determinations: and lastly, so authentic a Transcript of the word of God (con-

cerning which 'tis said, *Mat. 5. 18, one jot or one tittle shall not fail* ) is that which the establish'd, and that has receiv'd so many, and yet according to the confession of the infallible Corrector, wants still more alterations.

8. DEPENDENT upon this, and as great a mischief as any of the former, consequent to the with-drawing of the Scripture, I take to be the step it made to the overthrow of the ancient and most useful disciplin of the Church in point of Penance, whose rigors alwaies heretofore preceded the possibility of having absolution. Now of this we know a solemn part was the state of Audience, when the last person was receiv'd after long attendance without dores, prostrations, and lamentations there, within the entrance of the Church; and was permitted with the Catechumens or Candidats of Baptism, to hear the readings of the Scripture, and stay till Praier began, but then depart. He was oblig'd to hear the terrors of the Lord, the threats of the divine Law against sin and sinners, to stand among the unbaptiz'd and heathen multitude, and learn again the elements of that holy Faith from which he had prevaricated; and so in time be render'd capable of the devotions of the faithful, and afterward the reception of the Eucharist. But when the Scriptures were thought useles or dangerous to be understood and heard, it was

was consequent that the state of Audience should be cut off from Penance, and that the next to it, upon the self-same principle should be dismiss'd: and so the long probation formerly requir'd should be supplanted; and the compendious way of pardoning first, and repenting afterwards, the endless circle of sinning and being absolv'd, and then sinning and being absolv'd again, should prevail upon the Church. Which still obtains, notwithstanding the complaints, and irrefragable demonstrations of learned men even of the Romish Communion, who plainly shew this now receiv'd method, to be an innovation groundless and unreasonable, and most pernicious in its consequents.

9. AND, by the way, we may take notice that there cannot be a plainer evidence of the judgment of the Church, concerning the necessity of the Scriptures being known, not only by the learned but mean Christian, and the interest they have therein; then is the ancient course of Penance, establish'd by the practice of all the first Ages, and almost as many Councils, whether general or local, as have decreed any thing concerning discipline; with the penitentiary Books and Canons, which were written for the first eleven hundred years in the whole Christian world. For if even the unbaptiz'd Catechumen, and the last sinner, notwithstanding their slender

der knowledg in the mysteries of Faith, or frail pretence to the privilege thereof: had a right to the state of Audience, and was oblig'd to hear the Scripture read; surely the meanest unobnoxious Laic, was in as advantageous circumstances, and might not only be trusted with the reading of those sacred Books, but might claim them as his birth-right.

10. I may justly, over and above what has bin hitherto alleg'd, impute to the Governors of the same Church, and their withholding from the Laity the holy Scripture; the many dangerous errors, gross ignorances, and scandalous immoralities which have prevail'd among them both. It is no new method of divine vengeance, that there should *be like people, like Priest*, Hof. 4. 9. *and that the Idol shepherd who led his flock into the ditch, should fall therein himself*, Mat. 15. 14. And as the Prophet Zachary describes it, c. 11. 17. *The sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eie: his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eie shall be utterly darkned.*

11. BUT no consequence can be more obviously deducible from that practice, then that men should justify the withholding of the Scripture, by lessening its credit, and depreciating its worth: which has occasion'd those reproches which by the writers of the Church of *Rome*, of best note, have bin cast  
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upon it. As that it was a *Nose of wax*, a *lead*en rule, a *deaf and useles*s deputy to God in the office of a *Judg*; of *les*s authority then the *Roman Church*, and of *no more credit* then *Esops Fables*, but for the *testimony* of the *said Church*; that they contain things apt to raise laughter or indignation, that the *Latin Translation* in the *Complutensian Bible* is placed between the *Hebrew Text*, and the *Septuagint Version*, as our *Savior* was at his *Crucifixion* between two *thieves*; and that the *vulgar Edition* is of such authority that the *Originals* ought to be mended by it, rather then it should be mended from them: which are the complements of *Cardinal Bellarmin*, *Hosius*, *Eckius*, *Perron*, *Ximenes*, *Coqueus*, and others of that *Communion*: words to be answer'd by a *Thunderbolt*, and fitter for the mouth of a *Celsus* or a *Porphyrie*, then of the pious sons, and zealous *Champions* of the *Church of Christ*.

12. 'TIS to be expected that the *Romanists* should now wipe their mouths, and plead not guilty; telling us that they permit the *Scripture* to the *Laity* in their mother *Tongue*: And to that purpose the *Fathers* of *Rhemes* and *Doway* have publisht an *English Bible* for those of their communion. I shall therefore give a short and plain account of the whole affair, as really it stands, and then on *Gods* name let the *Romanist* make the best of their *Apology*.

13. THE fourth rule of the Index of prohibited Books compos'd upon the command and auspice of the Council of Trent, and publish'd by the authority of Pius the fourth, Sixtus the fifth, and Clement the eighth, runs thus; *Since 'tis manifest by experience, that if the holy Bible be suffer'd promiscuously in the vulgar Tongue, such is the temerity of men, that greater detriment then advantage will thence arise; in this matter let the judgment of the Bishop or Inquisitor be stood to: that with the advice of the Curat or Confessor, they may give leave for the reading of the Bible in the vulgar Tongue, translated by Catholics, to such as they know will not receive damage, but increase of Faith and Piety thereby. Which faculty they shall have in writings; and whosoever without such faculty shall presume to have or to read the Bible, he shall not till he have deliver'd it up, receive absolution of his sins.* Now ( to pass over the iniquity of obliging men to ask leave to do that which God Almighty commands ) when 'tis consider'd how few of the Laity can make means to the Bishop or Inquisitor, or convince them, or the Curat or Confessor, that they are such who will not receive damage, but encrease of Faith and Piety by the reading of the Scripture; and also have interest to prevail with them for their favor herein: and after all can' and will be at the charge of taking out the faculty, which is so penally requir'd: 'tis  
easy



easy to guess what thin numbers of the Laity are likely, or indeed capable of reaping benefit by this Indulgence pretended to be allowed them.

14. BUT, besides all this, what shall we say, if the power it self of giving Licences be a mere shew, and really signifies just nothing? In the observation subjoin'd to this fourth rule it is declar'd, that *the Impression and Edition thereof gives no new faculty to Bishops, or Inquisitors, or Superiors of regulars to grant Licences of buying, reading, or retaining Bibles publisht in a vulgar Tongue; since hitherto by the command and practice of the holy Roman and universal Inquisition, the power of giving such faculties, to read or retain vulgar Bibles, or any parts of Scripture of the Old or New Testament, in any vulgar Tongue; or also summaries, or historical compendiums of the said Bibles or Books of Scripture, in whatsoever Tongue they are written, has bin taken away.* And sure if a Lay-man cannot read the Bible without a faculty, and it is not in any ones power to grant it; 'twill evidently follow that he cannot read it: And so the pretence of giving liberty, owns the shame of openly refusing it; but has no other effect or consequence. And if any Romanist among us, or in any other Protestant Country enjoys any liberty herein, 'tis merely by connivance, and owed to a fear least the Vorary would be lost, and take the

the Bible where it was without difficulty to be had, if strictness should be us'd. And should Popery, which God forbid, become paramount; the Translations of the Scripture into our Mother Tongues, would be no more endur'd here, then they are in *Spain*: and they who have formerly bin wary in communicating the Scriptures; remembring how thereby their errors have bin detected, would upon a revolution effectually provide for the future, and be sure to keep their people in an Egyptian darkness, that might it self be felt, but that allow'd the notices of no other object. They would not be content with that composition of the Ammonite, to thrust out all the right eies of those that submitted to them, 1 *Sam.* 11. 2. but would put out both; as the Philistins did to *Samson*, that they might make their miserable captives for ever grind in their Mill, *Jud.* 16. 21.

15. BUT this heaviest of judgments will never fall upon the reform'd Churches, till by their vicious practice and contemt of the divine Law, they have deserted their profession; and made themselves utterly unworthy of the blessings they enjoy, and the light of that Gospel which with noon-day brightness has shin'd among them. Upon which account, I suppose it may not be impertinent in the next place to subjoin som plain directions, and cautionary advices, concerning the use of these sacred Books.

SECT.

S E C T. VIII.

*Necessary cautions to be us'd in the reading  
of the holy Scriptures.*

**I**T is a common observation: that the most generous and sprightly Medicins are the most unsafe; if not appli'd with due care and regimen: And the remark holds as well in spiritual as corporal remedies. The Apostle asserts it upon his own experience, \*that the doctrin of the Gospel, which was to som *the savor of life unto life*, *was to others the savor of death*, 2 Cor. 2. 15. And the same effect that the oral Word had then, the written Word may have now; not that either the one or the other have any thing in them that is of it self mortiferous, but becomes so by the ill disposition of the persons who so pervert it. It is therefore well worth our inquiry, what qualifications on our part are necessary to make the Word be to us what it is in it self, *the power of God unto salvation*, Rom. 1. 16. Of these som are previous before our reading, som are concomitant with it, and som are subsequent and follow after it.

2. OF those that go before, sincerity is a most essential requisit: by sincerity, I mean

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an upright intention, by which we direct our reading to that proper end for which the holy Scriptures were design'd; *viz.* the knowing Gods will in order to the practicing it. This honest simplicity of heart is that which Christ represents by the *good ground*, where alone it was that the seed could fructify, *Mat.* 13. 8. And he that brings not this with him, brings only the shadow of a Disciple. The *word of God*, is indeed, *sharper then a two-edged sword*, *Heb.* 4. 12. but what impression can a sword make on a body of air; which still slips from, and eludes its thrusts? And as little can all the practical discourses of holy Writ make on him, who brings only his speculative faculties with him, and leaves his will and affections behind him; which are the only proper subjects for it to work on.

3. To this we may probably impute that strange inefficaciousness we see of the Word. Alas, men rarely apply it to the right place: our most inveterat diseases lie in our morals; and we suffer the Medicin to reach no farther then our intellects. As if he that had an ulcer in his bowels should apply all his balsoms and sanatives only to his head. 'Tis true, the holy Scriptures are the treasures of divine Wisdom; the Oracles to which we should resort for saving knowledg: but they are also the rule and guide of holy Life: and he that covets to know Gods will for any purpose but to practice

etice it, is only studious to entitle himself to the greater number of *stripes*, Luk. 12. 47.

4. NAY farther, he that affects only the bare knowledg, is oft disappointed even of that. The Scripture, like the Pillar of fire and cloud, enlightens the Israelites, those who sincerely resign themselves to its guidance; but it darkens and confounds the Egyptians, *Ex.* 14. 20. And 'tis frequently seen, that those who read only to become knowing, are toll'd on by their curiosity into the more abstruse and mysterious parts of Scripture, where they entangle themselves in inextricable mazes and confusions; and instead of acquiring a more superlative knowledg, loose those easy and common notions which lie obvious to every plain well meaning Reader. I fear this Age affords too many, and too frequent instances of this; in men who have lost God in the midst of his Word, and studied Scripture till they have renounc'd its Author.

5. AND sure this infatuation is very just, and no more then God himself has warn'd us of, who *takes the wise in their own craftiness*, *Job.* 5. 12. but appropriates his *secrets only to them that fear him*, and has promis'd *to teach the meek his way*, *Psal.* 25. 9. 14. And this was the method Christ observ'd in his preaching; unveiling those truths to his Disciples, which to the Scribes and Pharisees, his inquisitive, yet refractory hearers, he wrapt up in parables:

not that he disliked their desire of knowledge, but their want of sincerity: which is so fatal a defect as blasts our pursuits, tho' of things in themselves never so excellent. This we find exemplified in *Simon Magus*, Acts 8. who tho' he coveted a thing in it self very desirable, the power of conferring the holy Ghost, yet desiring it not only upon undue conditions, but for sinister ends, he not only mist of that, but was (after all his convincement by the Apostles miracles, and the engagement of his Baptism) immerst *in the gall of bitterness*; and at last advanced to that height of blasphemy, as to set up himself for a God; so becoming a lasting *memento*, how unsafe it is to prevaricate in holy things.

6. But as there is a sincerity of the Will in order to practice, so there is also a sincerity of the understanding in order to belief; and this is also no less requisite to the profitable reading of Scripture. I mean by this, that we come with a preparation of mind, to embrace indifferently, whatever God there reveals as the object of our Faith: that we bring our own opinions, not as the clue by which to unfold Scripture, but to be tried and regulated by it. The want of this has bin of very pernicious consequence in matters both of Faith and speculation. Men are commonly prepossessed strongly with their own notions, and their errand to Scripture is not to lend them  
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light to judg of them; but aids to back and defend them.

7. OF this there is no Book of controversy that do's not give notorious proof. The Socinian can easily over-look the beginning of Saint *John*, that saies, *The Word was God*, Jo. 1. 1. and all those other places which plainly assert the Deity of our Savior; if he can but divert to that other more agreeable Text, that *the Father is greater then I.* Among the Romanists, *Peters* being said to be *first among the Apostles*, Mat. 10. 2, and that *on that Rock Christ would build his Church*, Mat. 16. 18. carries away all attention from those other places where Saint *Paul* saies he was not *behind the very chiefest of the Apostles*, 2 Cor. 11. 5. that upon him lay *the care of all the Churches*, 2 Cor. 11. 28. and that the Church was not built upon the *foundation of som one*, but *all the twelve Apostles*, Revel. 21. 14. So it fares in the business of the Eucharist: *This is my body*, Mat. 26. 26. carries it away clear for Transubstantiation, when our Saviors calling that which he drunk *the fruit of the vine*, Mat. 26. 29. and then Saint *Pauls* naming the Elements in the Lords Supper several times over Bread and Wine; *The Bread that we break, is it not the Communion of the Body of Christ: the Cup that we bless, is it not the Communion*, &c. 1 Cor. 10. 16. And again, *He that eats this Bread, and drinks this Cup unworthily*, &c. 1 Cor. 11.

29. can make no appearance of an Argument.

8. T H U S men once engag'd ransack for Texts that carry som correspondency to the opinions they have imbibed; and those how do they rack and scrue to bring to a perfect conformity; and improve every little probability into a demonstration? On the other side, the contrary Texts they look on as enemies, and consider them no farther then to provide fences and guards against them: So they bring Texts not into the scales to weigh, but into the field to skirmish, as Partizans and Auxiliaries of such or such opinions.

9. B Y this force of prepossession it is, that that sacred Rule, which is the measure and standard of all rectitude, is it self bow'd and distorted to countenance and abet the most contrary tenets: and like a variable picture, represents differing shapes according to the light in which you view it. And sure we cannot do it a worse office then to represent it thus dissonant to it self. Yet thus it must still be till men come unbiaſt to the reading of it. And certainly there is all the reason in the world they should do so: the ultimate *end of our faith is but the salvation of our souls*, 1 Pet. 1. 9. and we may be ſure the Scripture can best direct us what Faith it is which will lead us to that end.



10. W H Y should we not then have the same indifference which a traveller hath, whether his way lie on this hand or that; so as it be the direct road to his journies end? For altho it be infinitely material that I embrace right principles, yet 'tis not so that this should be right rather than the other: and our wishes that it should be so, proceed only from our prepossessions and fondness of our own conceptions, then which nothing is more apt to intercept the clear view of truth. It therefore nearly concerns us to deposit them, and to give up our selves without reserve to the guidance of Gods Word, and give it equal credit when it thwarts, as when it complies with our own notions.

11. W I T H O U T this, tho we may call Scripture the rule of Faith, and judg of controversies; yet 'tis manifest we make it not so, but reserve still the last appeal to our own prejudicat phancies: and then no wonder, tho we fall under the same occæcation which our Savior upbraids to the Jews, *that seeing, we see not, neither do we understand*, Mat. 13. 14. For he that will not be fav'd Gods way, will hardly be so by his own. He that resolves not impartially to embrace all the Scriptures dictates, comes to them as unsincerely, as the remnant of the Jews did to *Jeremiah* to inquire of the Lord for them, which he no sooner had don, but they protest against his mes-

message, *Jer.* 42. 20. and may expect as fatal an event.

12. BUT there are a set of men who deal yet more insincerely with the Word; that read it insidiously: on purpose to collect matter of objection and cavil: that with a malicious diligence compare Texts in hope to find contradictions; and read attentively, but to no other end then to remark incoherences and defects in the stile: which when they think they have started, they have their design; and never will use a quarter of the same diligence in considering how they may be solv'd, or consulting with those who may assist them in it. For I think I may appeal to the generality of those who have rais'd the loudest clamors against the Scripture, whether they have endeavor'd to render themselves competent judges of it by inquiring into the Originals, or informing themselves of those local Customs, peculiar Idioms, and many other circumstances, by which obscure Texts are to be clear'd. And tho I do not affirm it necessary to salvation that every man should do this; yet I may affirm it necessary to him that will pretend to judg. of the Bible: and he that without this condemns it, do's it as manifest injury, as a Judg. that should pass sentence only upon the Indictment, without hearing the defence.

13. AND certainly there cannot be any thing

thing more unmanly and disingenuous, then for men to inveigh and condemn before they inquire and examin. Yet this is the thing upon which so many value themselves, assuming to be men of reason, for that for which the Scripture pronounces them brute beasts, viz. *the speaking evil of those things they understand not*, 2 Pet. 2. 12. Would men use due diligence, no doubt many of those seeming contradictions would be reconcil'd, and the obscurities clear'd: and if any should after all remain, he might find twenty things fitter to charge it on, then want of verity or discourse in the inspir'd writers.

14. ALAS what human writing is there of near that Antiquity, wherein there are not many passages unintelligible? And indeed, unless modern times knew all those national customs, obsolete Laws, particular Rites and Ceremonies, Phrases and proverbial Sayings, to which such ancient Books refer, 'tis impossible but som passages must remain obscure. Yet in these we ordinarily have so much candor, as to impute their unintelligibleness to our own ignorance of those things which should clear them, the improprieties of stile, to the variation that times make in dialects, or to the errors of Scribes, and do not presently exclaim against the Authors as false or impertinent, or discard the whole Book for som such passages.

15. AND sure what allowances we make to other Books, may with more reason be made to the Bible; which having bin writ so many Ages since, past thro' infinit variety of hands, and (which is above all) having bin the object of the Devils, and wicked mens malice, lies under greater disadvantages then any human compofure: And doubtless men would be as equitable to that as they are to others, were it not that they more wish to have that false or irrational then any other Book. The plain parts of it, the precepts and threatnings speak clearer then they desire, gall and fret them; and therefore they will revenge themselves upon the obscurer: and seem angry that there are som things they understand not, when indeed their real displeasure is at those they do.

16. A second qualification preparatory to reading the Scripture is reverence. When we take the Bible in our hands, we should do it with other sentiments and apprehensions then when we take a common Book; considering that it is the word of God, the instrument of our salvation; or upon our abuse of it a promoter of our ruin.

17. AND sure this if duly apprehended, cannot but strike us with a reverential awe, make us to say with *Jacob*, Gen. 28. 17. *surely God is in this place*; controle all trifling phancies, and make us read, not for custom or divertise-

vertisement, but with those solemn and holy intentions which become the dignity of its Author. Accordingly we find holy men have in all Ages bin affected with it, and som to the inward reverence of the mind, have join'd the outward of the body also, and never read it but upon their knees: an example that may both instruct and reproach our profaness; who commonly read by chance, and at adventure: If a Bible happen in our way, we take it up as we would do a Romance, or Play-book; only herein we differ, that we dismiss it much sooner, and retain less of its impressions.

18 It was a Law of *Numa*, that no man should meddle with divine things, or worship the Gods, in passing, or by accident, but make it a set and solemn business. And every one knows with how great ceremony and solemnity the heathen Oracles were consulted. How great a shame is it then for Christians to defalk that reverence from the true God, which heathens allow'd their false ones?

19. Now this proceeds somtimes from the want of that habitual reverence we should alwaies have to it as Gods word, and somtimes from want of actual exciting it, when we go to read: for if the habit lie only dormant in us, and be not awak'd by actual consideration, it avails us as little in our reading, as the habitual strength of a man do's towards la-

bor, when he will not exert it for that end.

20. WE ought therefore, as to make it our deliberat choice to read Gods word; so when we do it, to stir up our selves to those solemn apprehensions of its dignity and authority, as may render us malleable, and apt to receive its impressions; for where there is no reverence, 'tis not to be expected there should be any genuine or lasting obedience.

21. SAINT *Austin* in his Tract to *Honoratus*, of the advantage of believing, makes the first requisit to the knowledg of the Scriptures to be the love of them. *Believe me*, saies he, *every thing in the Scripture is sublime and divine, its truth and doctrin are most accommodate to the refreshment, and building up of our minds: and in all respects so order'd, that every one may draw thence what is sufficient for him; provided he approach it with devotion, piety, and religion. The proof of this may require much reasoning and discourse. But this I am first to perswade, that you do not hate the Authors, and then that you love them. Had we an ill opinion of Virgil, nay, if upon the account of the reputation he has gain'd with our Predecessors, we did not greatly love, before we understood him; we should never patiently go thro all the difficult questions Grammarians raise about him. Many employ themselves in commenting upon him; we esteem him most, whose exposition most commends the Book, and shews that*  
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*the Author, not only was free from error, but did excellently well where he is not understood. And if such an account happen not to be given, we impute it rather to the Interpreter than the Poet.*

22. THUS the good Father; whose words I have transcrib'd at large, as being remarkable to the present purpose; he also shews that the mind of no Author is to be learnt from one averse to his doctrin: as that 'tis vain to enquire of *Aristotles* Books from one of a different Sect: Or of *Archimedes* from *Epicurus*: the discourse will be as displeasing as the speaker; and that shall be esteem'd absurd, which comes from one that is envi'd or despis'd.

23. A third preparative to our reading should be praier. The Scripture as it was dictated at first by the holy Spirit, so must still owe its effects and influence to its cooperation. *The things of God*, the Apostle tells us, *are spiritually discern'd*, 1 Cor. 2. 14. And tho the natural man may well enough apprehend the letter, and grammatical sense of the Word; yet its power and energy, that insinulative perswasive force whereby it works on hearts, is peculiar to the spirit; and therefore without his aids, the Scripture whilst it lies open before our eies, may still be *as a Book that is seal'd*, Esai. 29. 11. be as ineffective as if the characters were illegible.

24. BE-

24. BESIDES our Savior tells us the devil is still busy *to steal away the seed as soon as it is sown*, Mat. 13. 17. And unless we have some better guard than our own vigilance, he is sure enough to prosper in his attempt. Let it therefore be our care to invoke the divine Aid; and when ever we take the Bible into our hands, to dart up at least a hearty ejaculation, that we may find its effects in our hearts. Let us say with holy *David*, *open thou mine eyes O Lord, that I may see the wondrous things of thy Law. Blessed art thou O Lord, O teach me thy statutes*, Ps. 119. Nay indeed 'twil be fit matter of a daily solemn devotion, as our Church has made it an annual in the Collect on the second Sunday in Advent: a prayer so apt and fully expressive of what we should desire in this particular, that if we transcribe not only the example, but the very words, I know not how we can form that part of our devotion more advantageously.

25. IN the second place we are to consider what is requir'd of us at the time of reading the Scripture; which consists principally in two things. The first of these is attention, which is so indispensably requisite, that without it all Books are alike, and all equally insignificant: for he that adverts not to the sense of what he reads, the wisest discourses signify no more to him, than the most exquisite music do's to a man perfectly deaf. The letters and syllables



lables of the Bible are no more sacred then those of another Book; 'tis the sense and meaning only that is divinely inspir'd: and he that considers only the former, may as well entertain himself with a spelling-book.

26. WE must therefore keep our minds fixt and attent to what we read: 'tis a folly and lightness not to do so in human Authors; but 'tis a sin and danger not to do so in this divine Book. We know there can scarce be a greater instance of contemt and disvalue, then to hear a man speak, and not at all mind what he saies: yet this vilest affront do all those put upon God, who hear or read his Word, and give it no attention. Yet I fear the practice is not more impious then it is frequent: for there are many that read the Bible, who if at the end of each Chapter they should be call'd to account, I doubt they could produce very slender collections: and truly 'tis a sad consideration, that that sacred Book is read most attentively by those, who read it as some *preach the Gospel*; Phil. i. 15. *out of envy and strife*. How curiously do men inspect, nay ransack and embowel a Text to find a pretence for cavil and objection, whilst men who profess to look there for life and salvation. read with such a retchless heedlessness, as if it could tell them nothing they were concern'd in: and to such 'tis no wonder if their reading bring no advantage. God is  
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not in this sense *found of those that seek him not*, Esai. 65: 1: 'tis Satans part to serve himself, of the bare words and characters of holy Writ; for charms and amulets: the vertue God has put there consists in the sense and meaning, and can never be drawn out by drousy inadverting Readers.

27. THIS unattentiveness fore-stalls all possibility of good. How shall that convince the understanding, or perswade the affections, which do's not so much as enter the imagination. So that in this case the seed seems more cast away then in any of those instances the parable gives, *Mat. 13*. In those it still fell upon the soil, but in this it never reaches that; but is scatter'd and dissipated, as with a mighty wind, by those thoughts which have prepossess'd the mind. Let no man therefore take this sacred Book into his hand, till he have turn'd out all distracting phancies, and have his faculties free and vacant for those better objects which will there present themselves. And when he has so dispos'd himself for attention, then let him contrive to improve that attention to the best advantage.

28. To which purpose it may be very conducive to put it into som order and method. As for instance, when he reads the doctrinal part of Scripture, let him first and principally advert to those plain Texts which contain  
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the necessary points of Faith: that he may not owe his Creed only to his education, the institution of his Parents or Tutors; but may know the true foundation on which it is bottom'd, *viz.* the word of God, and may thence be able to justify his Faith: and as Saint *Peter* exhorts, be ready to give an answer to every man that asks him a reason of the hope that is in him, 1 Pet. 3. 15. For want of this it is, that Religion sits so loose upon men, that every wind of doctrine blows them into distinct and various forms; till at last their Christianity it self vapors away and disappears.

29. BUT let men be careful thus to secure the foundation, and then 'twill be commendable in them (who are capable of it) to aspire to higher degrees of speculation; yet even in these it will be their safest course chiefly to pursue such as have the most immediate influence on practice, and be more industrious to make observations of that sort, than curious and critical remarks, or bold conjectures upon those mysteries on which God has spread a veil.

30. BUT besides a mans own particular collections, it will be prudence in him to advantage himself of those of others, and to consult the learned'st and best expositors; and that not only upon a present emergency, when he is to dispute a point, (as most do)

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but in the constant course of this reading, wherein he will most sedatly, and dispassionately judg of the notions they offer.

31. AS to the choice of the portions of Scripture to be read in course, tho I shall not condemn that of reading the whole Bible in order, yet 'tis apparent that som parts of it (as that of the Levitical Law) are not so aptly accommodated to our present state, as others are; and consequently not so edificatory to us: and therefore I cannot see why any man should oblige himself to an equal frequency in reading them. And to this our Church seems to give her suffrage; by excluding such out of her public Lessons. And if we govern our privat reading by her measures, it will well express our deference to her judgment; who has selected som parts of Scripture, not that she would keep her children in ignorance of any, but because they tend most immediatly to practice.

32. NEITHER will the daily reading the Scripture in the rubricks order, hinder any man from acquainting himself with the rest. For he may take in the other parts as supernumeraries to his constant task, and read them as his leisure and inclination shall prompt. So that all the hurt that can accrue to him by this method, is the being invited to read sometimes extraordinary proportions.

33. IF it be objected, that to those who  
daily

daily hear the Church Service, 'twill be a kind of tautology, first to read those Lessons in privat, which soon after they shall hear read publicly, I answer that whatever men may please to call it, 'twill really be an advantage. For he that shall read a chapter by himself with due consideration, and consulting of good Paraphrasts, will have divid'd so far into the sense of it, that he will much better comprehend it when he hears it read: as on the other side, the hearing it read so immediately after will serve to confirm and rivet the sense in his mind. The one is as the conning; the other the repeating the Lesson; which every Schole-boy can tell us is best don at the nearest distance to each other. But I shall not contend for this, or any particular method; let the Scripture be read in proportion to every mans leisure and capacity, and read with attention; and we need not be scrupulous about circumstances, when the main duty is secur'd.

34. But as in the doctrinal, so in the preceptive part, there is a caution to be us'd in our attention. For we are to distinguish between those temporary precepts that were adapted to particular times and occasions; and such as are of perpetual obligation. He that do's not this may bring himself under the Jewish Law, or believe a necessity of selling all and giving it to the poor because 'twas

Christs command to the rich man, Mat. 19. or incur other considerable mischiefs.

35. Thus frequently commands are put in comprehensive indefinite words, but concern only the Generality to whom the Law is written; and not those who are entrusted with the vindication of their contempt. Accordingly 'tis said, *thou shalt not kill*, Mark. 10. 19. which concerns the private person; but extends not to the Magistrate in the execution of his office, who *is a revenger* appointed by God, *and bears not the sword in vain*. Rom. 13. 4. So the injunction not to swear at all, Mat. 5. 34 refers to the common transactions of life; but not those solemn occasions where an oath is to give glory to God, *and is the end of all strife*, Heb. 9. 16. Yet these mistakes at this day prevail with Anabaptists and Quakers, and bottom their denial of the Magistrates power to protect his Subjects by war; and to determin differences in Peace, by the oath of witnesses in judicial proceedings.

36. THERE is another distinction we are to attend to; and that is between absolute and primary commands, and secundary ones: the former we are to set a special remark upon, as those upon whose observance or violation our eternal life or death inseparably depends. And therefore our first and most solicitous care must be concerning them. I mention this,  
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not to divert any from aspiring to the highest degrees of perfection: but to reprove that preposterous course many take, who lay the greatest weight upon those things on which God laies the least; and have more zeal for oblique intimations, than for express downright commands; nay think by the one to commute for the contemnit of the other. For example, fasting is recommended to us in Scripture, but in a far lower key than moral duties: rather as an expedient and help to vertue, than as properly a vertue it self. And yet we may see men scrupulous in that, who startle not at injustice, and oppression ( that clamorous sin that cries to heaven ) who pretend to mortify their appetites by denying it its proper food, or being luxurious in one sort of it; and yet glut their avarice, eat up the poor, *and devour widows houses*, Mat. 23.

37. To such as these 'twould be good advice to fix their attention on the absolute commands, to study moral honesty, and the essentials of Christianity; to make a good progress there, and do what God indispensably requires: and then it may be seasonable to think of voluntary oblations: but till then they are so far from homage, that they are the most reprochful flattery; an attempt to bribe God against himself; and a sacrilege, like that of *Dionysius*; who took away *Apol-*  
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his golden robe, and gave him a staff one.

38. THE second thing requisite in our reading is application: this is the proper end of our attention: and without this we may be very busy to very little purpose. The most laborious attention without it, puts us but in the condition of those poor slaves that labor in the mines: who with infinit toil dig that ore of which they shall never partake. If therefore we will appropriate that rich treasure, we must apply, and so make it our own.

39. LET us then at every period of holy Writ, reflect and look on our selves as the persons spoke to. When we find *Philip* giving baptism to the Eunuch upon this condition that he *believe with all his heart*, Act. 8. let us consider that unless we do so; our baptism (like a thing surreptitiously obtain'd) conveys no title to us; will avail us nothing.

40. WHEN we read our Saviours denunciation to the Jews, *except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish*; Lu. 13. 5. we are to look on it as if address'd immediatly to our selves; and conclude as great a necessity of our repentance. In those black catalogues of crimes which the Apostle mentions, 1 Cor. 6. 10. and Gal. 5. 19, 20, 21. as excluding from the Kingdom of heaven, we are to behold our own guilts arraign'd, and to resolve that the same crimes will as certainly shut heaven gates against us, as those to whom those Epistles were  
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immediatly directed. In all the precepts of good life, and Christian vertue, we are to think our selves as nearly and particularly concern'd, as if we had bin Christs Auditors on the Mount. So proportionably in all the threats and promises we are either to tremble or hope, according as we find our selves adhere to those sins or vertues to which they are affixt.

41. **T**HIS close application would render what we read operative and effective, which without it will be useles and insignificant. We may see an instance of it in *David*; who was not at all convinc'd of his own guilt by *Nathans* parable (tho the most apposite that was imaginable) till he roundly appli'd it, saying, *thou art the man*: 2 Sam. 12. And unless we treat our selves at the same rate, the Scripture may fill our heads with high notions, nay with many speculative truths, which yet amounts to no more then the Devils theology, *Ja.* 2. 19. and will as little advantage us.

42. **I**T now remains that we speak of what we are to do after our reading; which may be summ'd up in two words: Recollect and practice. Our memories are very frail as to things of this nature. And therefore we ought to impress them as deep as we can, by reflecting on what we have read. It is an observation out of the Levitical Law, that those

those beasts only were clean, and fit for sacrifice, *that chew'd the cud*, Lev. 11. 4. And tho the ceremony were Jewish, the moral is Christian, and admonishes us how we should revolve and ruminate on spiritual instructions. Without this what we hear or read slips insensibly from us; and like letters writ in chalk, is wip't out by the next succeeding thought: but recollection engraves and indents the characters in the mind. And he that would duly use it, would find other manner of impressions; more affective and more lasting, then bare reading will leave.

43. WE find it thus in all Sciences: he that only reads over the rules; and laies aside the thoughts of them together with his Book, will make but a slow advance; whilst he that plods and studies upon them, repetes and reinforces them upon his mind, soon arrives to an eminency. By this it was that *David* attain'd to that perfection in Gods Law as to out-strip his teachers, *and understand more then the Ancients*, Ps. 119. 99, 100. because it was his *meditation* as himself tells us, *ver. 97, 99.*

44. LET us therefore pursue the same method; and when we have read a portion of Scripture, let us recollect what observable things we have there met with: what exhortations to vertue, or determents from vice; what promises to obedience, or menaces for the contrary: what examples of Gods vengeance,

geance against such or such sins; or what instances of his blessing upon duties. If we do this daily, we cannot but amass together a great stock of Scripture documents, which will be ready for us to produce upon every occasion. Satan can assault us no where, but we shall be provided of a guard, a *Scriptum est*; which we see was the sole armor the captain of our salvation us'd in his encounter with him. *Mat. 4. ver. 4, 7, and 10.* and will be as successful to us, if we will duly manage it.

45. THE last thing requir'd as consequent to our reading, is practice. This is the ultimate end, to which all the fore-going qualifications are directed. And if we fail here, the most assiduous diligence in all the former will be but lost labor. Let us mean never so well, attend never so close, recollect never so exactly; if after all we do not practise, all the rest will serve but to enhance our guilt. Christianity is an active Science, and the Bible was given us not merely for a theme of speculation, but for a rule of life.

46. And alas, what will it avail us that our opinions are right, if our manners be crooked? When the Scripture has shew'd us what God requires of us, nay, has evinc'd to us the reasonableness of the injunctions, the great agreeableness which they have to the excellency of our nature: and has backt this with

the assurance that *in keeping of them there shall be a great reward*, Ps. 19. 11. if in the midst of such importunate invitations to life we will chuse death ; we are indeed *worthy*, as the wise man speaks, *to take part with it*, Wis. 1. 16. our crimes are hereby increas'd to a monstrous bulk, and also depriv'd of that veil and shelter which darkness and ignorance would have given them. And a vicious Christian may have cause at the last day to wish that he had studied the Alcoran rather than the Bible. His sensualities might then have pleaded, that they were but the anticipating his Paradise, taking up that before hand, which his Religion propos'd to him as his *summum bonum*, his final and highest aim. But with what confusion must a Christian then appear, whose institution obliges him to mortify the flesh : and yet has made it the business of his life, not only to satisfy, but even to enrage, and enflame its appetites ? that has set up a counter-discipline to that of the Gospel he professes ; and when that requires austerities and self-denials, to reduce corrupt nature to a tameness and subjection ; has not only pull'd off the bridle, but us'd the spur ; contriv'd Arts to debauch even corruption it self ; and has forc'd his relucting nature upon studied and artificial leudness ? Such men may be thought to have read the Scripture with no other design but to be sure to  
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run counter to it ; that by informing themselves of Gods will, they may know the more exactly how to affront and contradict it.

47. *NAY,* so it is, too many unto malice add contempt; are not content only sullenly to resist its Precepts, but despise and revile them also; arraign the wisdom of God, and pronounce the divine Laws to be weak and impertinent; lay their Scenes of ridiculous mirth in the Bible; rally in the sacred Dialect, and play the Buffoons with the most serious thing in the world. An impious licentiousness which is now grown to that height, that it is one of the wonders of Gods long-suffering, that there are not as many eminent instances of the vengeance, as there are of the guilt. I have formerly complain'd of it, and must still crave leave to do so, It is indeed so spreading an infection, that we can never be sufficiently arm'd against it. Some degrees of it have tainted many who have not utterly renounc'd their reverence for the Bible: there being those who in their solemn moods own it as Gods word and profess they must finally stand or fall by its verdict; who yet in their jocular humors make light and irreverent applications of its phrases and sentences, furnish out their little jests in its attire, and use it as if they thought it good for nothing else.

48. *AND* certainly this abuse in men that own the Bible, is infinitely more monstrous

then in those who defy it: the later look on it as a common thing; and use it as such: but for those who confess it sacred; thus to prostitute it, is a flat contradiction as much against the rules of Discourse as Religion: 'tis to offer the same abuse to Christ in his Word, which the rude soldiers did to his person; to bow the knee before it, and yet expose it as an object of scorn and laughter. But sure there cannot be two things more inconsistent, then the avowing it to be dictated by God in order to the most important concern of man, and yet debase it to the vilest purposes; make it the drudg and hackney to our sportful humors, and bring it out as the Philistims did *Samson*, only to make us merry, *Jud. 16. 25.*

49. INDEED one would wonder how that should become a proper instrument for that purpose, that those doctrines of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come (every where scatter'd thro that Book) which set heathen *Felix* a trembling, should set Christians a laughing: and yet should men cite the same things and phrases out of another Author, there would be no jest in it. It seems therefore that the spirit and essence of this sort of wit lies in the profaneness. How absurd is it then for men that do not utterly abjure Religion, to affect this impious sort of raillery, which has nothing but daring wickedness

edness to recommend it? For certainly, of all the waies of discourse that ever pretended to wit, this has the least claim to it.

50. WHAT strength of reason, or height of phancy is there, in repeting of phrases and fragments of Books, when what they would say, they might much more properly express in their own words? In any other instance but this of the Bible, it would pass rather for a defect than an excess of wit. But that which I suppose renders it so taking, is, that it is the cheapest expedient for men to arrive to that reputation. Men that cannot go to the cost of any thing that is truly ingenious, can by this means immediatly commence wits; if they can but charge their memories with half a dozen Texts, they need no other furniture for the trade; these mangled and transposed, will be ready at all turns, and render them applauded by those who have no other measure of wit, but its opposition to Piety. But would God, men would look a little before them, and consider what the final reckoning will be for such divertisements; and if the whole world be an unequal exchange for a soul, what a miserable Merchant is he that barter his for a bald insipid jest? such as a sober man would avoid were there no sin in it.

51. I know men are apt to flatter themselves, that these lighter frolics will pass for nothing,

nothing, so long as they do not seriously and maliciously oppose Gods word: but I fear they will find God in earnest, tho they be in jest. He that has *magnified his Word above all things*, Psal. 138. 2. cannot brook that we should make it vile and cheap, play and dally with it. And if it were a capital crime to convert any of the perfume of the Sanctuary to common use, *Ex. 30. 32.* can we think God can be pleas'd to see his more sacred Word, the theme of our giddy mirth, and have his own words echoed to him in profane drolery?

52. BUT besides 'tis to be consider'd that this wanton liberty is a step to the more solemn and deliberate content of Gods word: custom do's strangely prescribe to us; and he that a while has us'd any thing irreverently, will at last bring his practice into argument, and conclude that there is no reverence due to it. God knows we are naturally too apt to slight and easy apprehensions of sacred things; and had need to use all Arts and Instruments to impress an awe upon our minds.

53. IT will sure then be very unsafe for us to trifle with them, and by so undue a familiarity draw on that content which we should make it our care to avoid. The wise man saies, *he that contemns small things, shall fall by little and little*, Eccl. 19. 1. And tho no degree of irreverence towards God or his  
Word,



Word, can be call'd a small thing absolutely consider'd, yet comparatively with the more exorbitant degrees it may : and yet that smaller is the seed and parent of the greatest. It is so in all sins ; the kingdom of Satan, like that of God, may be compar'd to a *grain of mustard seed*, Mat. 13. 31. which tho little in it self, is mighty in its increase.

54. No man ever yet began at the top of villany, but the advance is still gradual from one degree to another ; each commission smoothing and glibbing the way to the next. He that accustoms in his ordinary discourse, to use the sacred Name of God with as little sentiment and reverence, as he do's that of his neighbor or servant ; that makes it his common by-word, and cries Lord and God upon every the lightest occasion of exclamation or wonder, this man has a very short step to the using it in oaths, and upon all frivolous occasions ; and he that swears vainly, is at no great distance from swearing falsely. It is the same in this instance of the Scriptures : He that indulges his wit to rally with them, will soon come to think them such tame things that he may down-right scorn them : And when he is arriv'd to that, then he must pick quarrels to justify it, till at last he arrive even to the height of enmity.

55. LET every man therefore take heed of setting so much as one step in this fatal circle ;

circle ; guard himself against the first insinuation of this guilt : and when a jest offers it self as a temptation , let him balance that with a sober thought , and consider whether the jest can quit the cost of the profanation. Let him possess his mind with an habitual awe , take up the Bible with solemn thoughts , and other kind of apprehensions then any human Author : and if he habituate himself to this reverence , every clause and phrase of it that occurs to his mind , will be apter to excite him to devout ejaculations then vain laughter.

56. It is reported of our excellent Prince , King *Edward* the sixth ; that when in his Council Chamber , a Paper that was call'd for happen'd to lie out of reach , and the Person concern'd to produce it , took a Bible that lay by , and standing upon it reacht down the Paper : the King observing what was don , ran himself to the place , and taking the Bible in his hands , kissed it , and laid it up again. Of this it were a very desirable moral , that Princes , and all persons in authority , would take care not to permit any to raise themselves by either a hypocritical or profane trampling upon holy things. But besides that , a more general application offers its self ; that all men of what condition soever , should both themselves abstain from every action that has the appearance of a  
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content of the holy Scripture; and also when they observe it in others, discountenance the insolence: and by their words and actions give Testimony of the veneration which they have for that holy Book; they see others so wretchedly despise.

57. BUT above all let him who reads the Scripture seriously, set himself to the practice of it; and daily examin how he proceeds in it: he that diligently do's this, will not be much at leisure to sport with it: he will scarce meet with a Text which will not give him cause of reflection; and provide him work within his own brest: every duty injoin'd will prompt him to examin how he has perform'd; every sin forbid, will call him to recollect how guilty he has bin, every pathetic strain of devotion will kindle his zeal, or at least upbraid his coldness: every heroic example will excite his emulation. In a word, every part of Scripture will, if duly appli'd, contribute to some good and excellent end. And when a thing is proper for such noble purposes; can it be the part of a wise man to apply it only to mean and trivial? Would any but an Idiot wast that Sovereign Liquor in the washing of his feet, which was given him to expel poison from his heart? And are not we guilty of the like folly when we apply Gods word to serve only a ludicrous humor: and make ourselves merry with that which was design'd for the most

serious and most important purpose; the salvation of our souls. And indeed who ever takes any lower aim than that, and the virtues preparatory to it in his study of Scripture, extremely debases it.

58. LET us therefore keep a steady eye upon that mark, and press towards it as the Apostle did; *Phil. 3. 14. walk by that rule* the holy Scripture proposes; faithfully and diligently observe its precepts, that we may finally partake its promises. To this end continually pray we in the words of our holy mother the Church unto Almighty God, who has caus'd all holy Scripture to be written for our learning; that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of his holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting Life, which he has given in our Savior Jesus Christ.

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